DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 362 257 PS 021 547

AUTHOR Stonehouse, Anne
TITLE Opening the Doors: Child Care in a Multicultural Society.
INSTITUTION Australian Early Childhood Association, Inc., Watson.
REPORT NO ISBN-1-86323-009-2
PUB DATE 91
NOTE 118p.
AVAILABLE FROM Australian Early Childhood Association, Inc., P.O. Box 105, Watson, Australian Capital Territory 2602, Australia ($25, Australian).
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Child Care Occupations; *Cultural Interrelationships; *Cultural Pluralism; *Day Care Centers; Foreign Countries; Heterogeneous Grouping; Intercultural Communication; Limited English Speaking; *Multicultural Education; Preschool Education; *Program Administration; School Personnel
IDENTIFIERS *Australia

ABSTRACT

Intended for directors and coordinators in Australian day-care centers, this book presents guidelines on providing mainstream services to Anglo-Australians and children from other cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Section 1 outlines the broader goals in incorporating a multicultural perspective in children's services. Section 2 outlines 11 principles underlying a good day care experience, while section 3 defines a multicultural perspective in terms of what it can and cannot offer. Section 4 offers guidance on developing partnerships with parents, covering the characteristics of partnerships and ways to make them work. Special attention is given to involving non-English-speaking families. Section 5 focuses on staffing concerns, including information on qualities to develop in staff, staff from non-English-speaking backgrounds, encouraging staff contributions, promoting teamwork, and gaining qualifications. Section 6 addresses language and communication concerns, including nonverbal communication, English as children's second language, and first language maintenance and development at home. Section 7 then discusses center policies, while section 8 offers guidance on creating a caring, multicultural physical environment. Section 9 deals with the multicultural curriculum or program, covering goals, programming, content, and routines. Section 10 looks at discipline as a way of helping children learn respect and caring. Section 11 presents guidelines for inservice education and support for staff, while section 12 suggests ways of getting started. Appendixes include policy statements, a center environment checklist, and a resource center list. Contains 31 references. (AC)

ED 362 257

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

OPENING THE DOORS

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Pam Cahir

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC).

ANNE STONEHOUSE

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Opening the Doors

Child Care in a Multicultural Society

OPENING THE DOORS

Child Care in a Multicultural Society

ANNE STONEHOUSE

AUSTRALIAN EARLY CHILDHOOD ASSOCIATION INC.

ISBN: 1 86323 009 2

Copyright: © 1991 Australian Early Childhood Association Inc.

Published by:
Australian Early Childhood Association Inc.
Knox Street WATSON ACT 2602

Layout and Design: David Wong
Printed by: Australian Print Group

Acknowledgements

The following people should be thanked particularly for their contribution to this document:

Alice Branco, Beryl Cooper, and the staff at the Casuarina Family Centre in Darwin;

Pina Mariani and the staff at the Barry Beckett Child Care Centre, Coburg, Victoria;

Pam Schurch, Jen Levy, Elizabeth Hopson, and the staff at the Sydney Lady Gowrie Child Centre;

The staff at the Free Kindergarten Association Multicultural Resource Centre, Richmond, Victoria; *Priscilla Clark, Lee Christofis, Jennifer Hall, Creina Porter;*

The members of the Project Steering Committee:

Pam Cahir (Convenor)
National Director
Australian Early Childhood Association

Beverley Ch'ng
Co-ordinator
Ethnic Children's Services Migrant Resource Centre ACT

Priscilla Clarke
Director Multicultural Resource Centre
Free Kindergarten Association of Victoria

Vivi Germanos-Koutsounadis
Director
Ethnic Child Care Development Unit
Ethnic Child Care, Family and Community Services Co-operative NSW

Catherine Gyngell
Assistant Director
Program Support and Special Services Section
Child Care Program Development Branch
Commonwealth Dept of Community Services & Health

Jen Levy
Executive Co-ordinator
Lady Gowrie Child Centre NSW

Vasiliki Nihas
Assistant Secretary
Liaison & Equity Branch
Office of Multicultural Affairs
Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet

Nada Spasojevic
Special Project Officer
Department of Family and Community Services NSW

Anne Stonehouse
Associate Professor
Faculty of Education
Northern Territory University

Elizabeth Djandilnga Thorne
Teacher
Farrer Primary School ACT

The Commonwealth Office of Multicultural Affairs in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Australian Early Childhood Association, the Commonwealth Department of Community Services and Health, and the New South Wales Department of

Family and Community Services worked together to make this project possible. Funding was provided by the Office of Multicultural Affairs and the Commonwealth Department of Community Services and Health.

Colin Gorton of Darwin Business Machines generously provided an Amstrad PPC 640 Portable Personal Computer for use in this project.

Photographs supplied by: Barry Ledwidge; Lady Gowrie Child Centre NSW

Cover photograph: Courtesy Annette Doran and Chris Haley
Photographer: Joanna Jankaus

Foreword

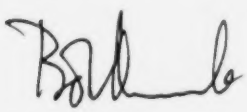
It gives me great pleasure that my Government has been able to sponsor the exciting project on multicultural child care practice which has led to the development of this publication, *Opening the Doors: Child Care in a Multicultural Society.*

What is most pleasing about this book is the way in which it takes a commitment to the principles of Access and Equity and translates that into a resource which will support child care workers to care for young children in ways which prepare them to be responsible adults in a multicultural society.

The essential message is that there is an intrinsic relationship between the principles that underpin good child care practice and those that underpin the concept of multiculturalism. The purpose of this book is to make explicit that relationship in ways which support child care workers to respond sensitively to the demands of caring for children in a multicultural society.

Children learn their attitudes to similarities and differences and this learning begins at a very early age. They learn by observing the similarities and differences between people and by absorbing the spoken and unspoken messages about those differences. Given this it is vital that child care workers are provided with resources which enable them to respond positively, sensitively and responsibly to the cultural and linguistic diversity which is an integral and enriching aspect of our society.

The Australian Early Childhood Association is to be congratulated for initiating this project which the Commonwealth Government has been very pleased to help fund as part of our commitment to provide affordable quality child care for all Australians.



R J L Hawke

Prime Minister of Australia

Contents

Introduction 1

1. Where We're Heading 4

2. Principles Underlying a Good Experience for Children 6

The principles 6

3. What is A Multicultural Perspective? 9

No one right way 9

Acknowledgement of prejudices 11

Similarities and differences 11

Recognising and combating discrimination 12

For the entire program 13

Sensitive treatment of diversity 14

For all children 16

Enriching and fun 17

Natural incorporation of variety 17

Language is critical 18

Staff and families 19

Developmental appropriateness 19

The Centre and the wider community 19

4. Partnership with Parents 22

Characteristics of the partnership 22

Making it work 23

In the beginning 25

On a continuing basis 25

How parents can help 30

Participation on the management committee 32

When there are non-English speaking families 33

Letting all parents in on a multicultural perspective 39

5. Staff 40

Qualities to develop in staff 41

Staff from non-English speaking backgrounds 42

Assisting staff to contribute 44

Being a team 46

Gaining qualifications 47

6. Language and Communication 49

A variety of languages for all children 49

Non-verbal communication 50

The child who is learning English as a second language 50

Maintaining and developing the first language at home 55

7. Centre Policies **56**

8. The Environment **60**

Choosing equipment and materials 60

Using materials and equipment from other cultures 63

Where to find materials 65

Creating a caring space 65

9. The Curriculum or Program **68**

Interactions 68

Goals 69

Some considerations in programming 70

What is offered in a multicultural program 71

A look at some features of a curriculum 72

Focusing on similarities and differences 74

Routines 75

Centre checklists 76

10. Discipline: Helping Children Learn Respect and Caring **77**

11. In-service Education and Support for Staff **82**

Support and advisory services 82

Support group 83

In-service education 83

Topics for in-service 85

Child rearing practices in other cultures 86

Looking at what's happening 87

12. Getting Started **89**

Getting started with parents and staff 90

Some steps to take 91

Addressing racism 92

The professional context 93

Appendix 1 **95**

AECA Specific Policy Interpretation Related to Cultural Diversity

Appendix 2 **97**

Excerpt from the FKA Submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Education and the Arts — National Language Policy

Appendix 3 **98**

The Centre Environment Checklist

Appendix 4 **102**

Resource Centres

References **107**

How to Use This Book

This book is about centre-based child care services for children under 5.

This book can be read in sections or as a whole. However, the first five sections are critical, as they set the stage for what is to follow. It is strongly recommended that Sections 1-5 be read thoroughly before going further. Key points have been highlighted for those who want only an overview. Those who want more detailed information can read the entire section. The final section indicates sources of further information.

Introduction

focuses on a multicultural perspective

Many early childhood professionals have embodied in their child care centres for a long time a perspective that acknowledges the cultural and linguistic diversity of the Australian community, and yet some of them feel unsure about what they are doing. Others wonder what a multicultural perspective means and seek guidance about how to begin. Still others are sceptical, and question the need for and value of a multicultural perspective. Much of the scepticism is founded on misconceptions about what a multicultural perspective in child care means.

People who work in child care centres are very busy and unfortunately have precious little time to reflect on their philosophy and practice or to pursue new ideas and information. Nevertheless, the large majority of child care centre personnel are keen to provide the best possible experiences for children.

addresses the questions and concerns of staff

This book has been prepared with the questions and concerns of staff and the preciousness of their time uppermost in mind. Consequently, all efforts have been made to make the information accessible and easily readable to enable people to use it at the level of detail that suits them, and to address specific issues and concerns. Some very important topics are covered briefly where other good resource materials are easily available.

Who Is It For?

mainstream services for under five year olds

While the focus of this book is centre-based services for under five year olds, much of the information will apply to family day care, sessional programs for three to five year olds, out-of-school hours care, and other early childhood settings. After all, the principles for providing appropriate experiences for children in the early childhood years and much of the practice are the same, regardless of the setting.

directors, co-ordinators and day care child care workers

This material is written specifically for directors and co-ordinators of long day care centres, as they are the key people to influence the day-to-day quality of child care services, but it will also be relevant for child care workers.

The focus is on mainstream services, which are likely to cater for Anglo-Australians and children from one or several other cultural and linguistic backgrounds. There

would also be some centres that may have only Anglo-Australian children, but these would be rare. This focus should not be interpreted as a judgment about mainstream services being preferable to those sponsored by particular cultural groups and/or operated for families from a particular cultural or linguistic background. Both types have particular strengths and advantages. Neither should there be inferred a judgment about where Aboriginal and other children from non-Anglo-Australian backgrounds are best cared for. It is a reality that not all parents of Aboriginal and Anglo-Australian background will have access to services established specifically for their needs, and some families who do have access may choose to send their children to mainstream services.

No Recipes

Gives example of inappropriate practice

Some readers will be disappointed at the lack of specificity and concrete suggestions in this book. There are many publications available with specific suggestions for activities and experiences appropriate for a multicultural perspective. Sources of these materials are listed at the back of the book. There is however, a more important reason for the lack of specific detail. Within the book, along with principles, there are suggestions for appropriate practice and illustrations of those suggestions, but this is not a recipe book. Caring well for children is too complex for anyone who writes about it to be prescriptive, or to reduce it to a list of do's and don'ts. Besides, good practice relies heavily on sensitive responses to the needs and interests of the clients — in this case, both children and their families.

Each centre's response will be unique

This means that it is not possible for one person to tell another exactly what to do. A basic goal of a multicultural perspective is that children will learn that there is seldom one right way to do things; rather there are many different ways. We must apply that principle in our own work. It follows then that each centre's multicultural perspective will be unique, as it will need to reflect the families that use the centre as well as the community in which the centre is located.

Who Contributed?

Early childhood workers

The experience and expertise of a large number of Australian early childhood personnel have been relied on in writing this book. Substantial time was spent in three child care centres to collect information. It was a privilege to see care of such high quality and to see a multicultural perspective being implemented so naturally and thoughtfully. Discussions were held with people who provide resources, advice and in-service education related to a multicultural perspective. The members of the Project Steering Committee also provided valuable insights and information, as well as animated debate.

Staff and parents of three special centres

What Did They Share?

agreement on what matters

a commitment to rethinking their practice

It was most heartening to see and hear many matters of the key messages over and over; in spite of differences in emphasis, there seemed to be almost total consensus about the critical elements in a multicultural program. This book hopefully reflects that consensus, the collective wisdom of people with a tremendous amount of energy, expertise and dedication in caring for children and their families. To all those people who took time to talk about this important topic, thanks are extended. It is hoped that the pages that follow reflect accurately the insights they shared. It is not that these people have *all* the answers, although exemplary practice was observed and tremendous knowledge shared. It is rather that they are continually asking questions, looking at what they are doing, questioning and trying to do better. That is what makes the difference between services or professionals of high quality and those that are mediocre.

The most difficult part of any journey is taking the first step. Fortunately, it is not true that the rewards do not come until the destination is reached. They will come once the journey has commenced. Children, families and cultures are complex and changing. Caring well for children in ways that acknowledge cultural and linguistic diversity never allows one the luxury of having arrived permanently. Happy journey!

Anne Stonehouse

1 Where We're Heading

Incorporating a multicultural perspective must begin with acknowledgement and acceptance of the reality that Australia is a multicultural society. The term "multicultural" is being used here in its simplest sense, to indicate that people from a wide variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds live in this country.

The reality of the Australian population leads many Australians to work for a better way of living together. Germanos-Koutsounadis (1988/89:10) quotes the definition of a multicultural society as adopted by the Fourth National Conference of the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia:

towards harmony, equity and valuing diversity

A multicultural society is one where a variety of different cultural groups co-exist harmoniously, free to maintain their distinctive religious, linguistic or social customs; equal as individuals in their access to resources and services appropriate to them and their needs; to civil and political rights; and sharing with the rest of society particular concerns and values. There would be diversity, equality, empathy of interaction. All of the groups would stress tolerance of cultural, linguistic and religious differences which would be complementary to the loyalties the individual shares with other Australians and which form his/her identity as an Australian in the Australian ethos.

Today's children will live, learn, love and work with people from other cultures.

This statement embodies the aims for children's services. So the real reason for embracing a multicultural perspective is a pragmatic one — today's children will work with, go to school with, be friends with, live next door to, form permanent relationships with people from cultures different from their own.

towards an inclusive perspective in child care

The aims of a multicultural perspective in child care relate to children's past, their present and their future. Their history and their family's history are acknowledged, they are provided with a rich caring experience, which will influence the values and attitudes they carry with them for the rest of their lives.

The aims of a multicultural perspective in child care relate also to valuing one's own culture and language and appreciating the culture and language of others. They have to do with helping children to acknowledge commonalities between themselves and others, to value diversity, and to view differences in a constructive way.

Hendrick (1988: 257) issues an important reminder relating to aims:

towards seeing difference as enriching

towards respecting others

. . . The basic learning should be that everyone is worthwhile and that each child brings with him from his family special things that enrich the group and that are fun to share. In other words, we hope to teach that each child is special, not that each child is peculiar. The purpose of multicultural curriculum is to attach positive feelings to multicultural experiences so that each child will feel included and valued, and will also feel friendly and respectful toward people from other ethnic and cultural groups.

Millikan and Steele (1988:np) assert that appropriate goals for children are the starting point for good practice. They suggest the following goals:

1. ***To provide the opportunity for all children to develop self esteem and a positive attitude toward themselves and others.***
2. ***For all children to have access to information regarding their cultural heritage based on their experience, knowledge and interest.***
3. ***For all children to develop a growing awareness of the unique nature of Australia.***
4. ***To provide opportunities for children to extend their communication skills.***

2 Principles Underlying a Good Experience For Children

This book rests on the conviction that providing a multicultural perspective is an application of principles of quality care. It is not something set apart, special, or separate. Having stated that, it must also be said that providing a multicultural perspective is not always easy, and the ways to do it well are not always obvious. Doing it well requires a commitment by staff, and may entail major alterations to collective and individual philosophies, practices and attitudes. It may require people to challenge beliefs they have held all their lives.

better practice depends on a willingness to change

Derman-Sparks and Jones (1988) note that criteria related to a multicultural perspective in the accreditation process for early childhood centres in the United States administered by the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs are the ones centres find most difficult to meet.

There are numerous lists of principles or beliefs that underpin the provision of child care of high quality, and one such list follows. These principles will be elaborated in the sections that follow.

The Principles

- Respect is the starting point for the provision of quality care. This includes:
  - respect for the individual and others, which translates into allowing children, no matter how young, to exercise some autonomy, to have some control over their daily experience
  - respect for parents and families
  - respect for staff
  - helping children to learn to respect themselves and other people, and to understand differences between people.
- A positive self concept is a necessary pre-requisite for healthy development and learning. Self concept includes feelings about one's own gender, physical self, race, culture and language. The self concept develops from messages one gets from others.

Each child is unique.

acknowledgement of each child as special

- Each person is unique and the starting point for providing a good experience is valuing individuality. A person's uniqueness is contributed to by his or her own individuality, family, community, race, culture, language and past experience. Caring and respect for others involves valuing both the differences between people and their commonalities.

need for security and trust

- Feelings of security and trust are a necessary backdrop to development and learning; they derive from sensitive, consistent caring.
- Young children learn best through active involvement with materials, through self-initiated, first-hand experiences.

children learn by:
- doing
- initiating
- building on the known

- Children's learning about care and respect for other people comes largely through modelling, what they see happening around them, and what they experience themselves.
- Effective learning requires starting with the known, what is familiar; therefore, the physical environment as well as practices in the centre should reflect the known world of the children.

> *Especially in the critical early years when first processes are being mastered and identity is being formed, effective learning best occurs in an environment in which the child can grow naturally from the known to the unknown. This means early learning in his own, not an alien language, based on the symbols that prevail in the daily life of his family and community. The child can then move confidently onwards and outwards from his own environment, coping more effectively with the demands of others.* (Bernard van Leer Foundation, 1984: 9)

language is vital

- The use of language is closely tied to cognitive development and self concept; nurturing competence and confidence in language is critically important in the early years. All children have the right to maintain and develop their first language as well as to become proficient in English.

support in conflict management

- Children will need considerable help to resolve constructively the inevitable conflicts that occur when people engage in meaningful interactions.

parents are partners

- A partnership with each child's parents is an essential ingredient of quality care.

staff are role models and need support

- In order to work effectively with children, staff must model the relationships, attitudes, and behaviours they are assisting children to learn. Staff must be cared for and supported in ways similar to those they employ to assist children's development.

The rest of this book makes explicit the application of these beliefs to daily practice in a centre that takes into account the Australian community that we all live in now and the need to prepare children to be responsible adults in a society that is culturally and linguistically diverse.

3 What Is A Multicultural Perspective?

A multicultural perspective can be defined and described most effectively through a set of contrasting statements about what it is and what it is not, illustrated by quotes from people in the field.

No One Right Way

diversity is positive

It begins with a positive attitude toward diversity, a recognition that, with regard to most things, there is no one right way. It is not a belief that "our way is the right way", a view that other cultures are deprived in some way, or an effort to get children who are different to hide their differences or get rid of them in order to "fit in".

The attitudes children adopt about differences can be influenced by child care staff.

MISCONCEPTION: "They came to this country to live — the best thing we can do to help them get on is teach them our ways."

MISCONCEPTION: "We treat all children the same here; race and color don't make any difference. What's the point of making a big issue out of it — the children don't take any notice of the differences!"

ifference does matter

There are some major problems with the attitudes illustrated by the above comments. Firstly, treating all children the same ignores individual differences. A major principle of quality care refers to the uniqueness of each child and the recognition that this is the starting point for providing a meaningful experience.

Secondly, skin colour and cultural and linguistic background do matter, and children are picking up attitudes about skin colour and other differences from a very early age. There is substantial evidence that children begin to notice differences at around the age of two years (Derman-Sparks, 1988). The attitudes they adopt about those differences is what child care staff can influence. It is essential that they learn that difference does not equate with deficit.

The term used by Derman-Sparks and Jones (1988:3,4) to refer to denial of differences is "colorblindness". About it they write:

Bigotry assumes that differences are unequal; colorblindness denies that differences are significant. . . . Colorblindness assumes that race relations are a question of skin color and ignores issues of history, culture, and the institutional power relationship created by racism. Colorblindness creates a comforting world view for whites while blatantly ignoring the daily experience of people of other races. It establishes the white experience as the norm and the differences in others' experience as unimportant . . . Paradoxically, however, people espousing a colorblind position often recognize the need to bring children of different backgrounds together so that, by playing with each other, they can discover that "we are all the same".

"Colorblindness" ignores the fact of differences as well as people's feelings about differences.

Assuming that cultures other than the mainstream culture are inferior or deprived also runs counter to a multicultural perspective. This leads to efforts to "fill children up" with the mainstream culture and ignore their own. Derman-Sparks (1988:6) states:

It often reflects altruistic intentions — 'I have it good, and I want to help those who don't' — but it is ethnocentric, and ultimately racist, in its treatment of other people's cultures and history as inferior or nonexistent.

Acknowledgement of Prejudices

recognising bias is a starting point for change

It begins with acknowledgement of the existence of bias and prejudice in oneself, other staff, and children as a starting point for doing something constructive about them. It is not denial of signs of bigotry in one's own behaviour and language or those of children.

EXAMPLE: Derman-Sparks (1988:2,3) cites the example of the child who refuses to hold a black child's hand because it is dirty. The adult replies, "Don't say that, it will hurt LaVon's feelings. I'm sure she washed her hands this morning. Here, you can walk with Mivoko, and I'll hold LaVon's hand. That way everyone will be happy". In this response, Derman-Sparks notes, the adult "has given a child permission to reject another child on the basis of color".

Similarities and Differences

what is shared is important

It focuses on assisting children to acknowledge and accept both their commonalities and similarities with others, on the one hand, as well as their differences. It does not stop at just pointing out differences.

Child care staff can help children share their similarities as well as accept their differences.

A multicultural perspective does not consist solely of a focus on differences. It is equally important that the similarities among people are given significant emphasis. A

question worth serious consideration by all people who embrace a multicultural perspective is the following: What is it that people have in common who live in Australia and how can that be emphasised along with promoting enjoyment of diversity? One answer to that question, and it has many answers, is that all people living in Australia share the land, the environment, and protection and preservation of it should be a common concern (Millikan, 1989).

A second more basic answer is that people share many of the same needs and feelings, although the way they meet those needs and express those feelings will differ. This is what children can begin to learn through the concrete experiences offered in child care. Hendrick (1988: 264) suggests that children can be helped to learn about the commonality of biological and psychological needs – the fact that, for example, we all get hungry, we all get sleepy, we all yawn. She writes:

The same principle can be taught in relation to emotions; everyone feels mad sometimes, everyone wants to belong to somebody, most people want to have friends, and most children feel a little lost when their mothers leave them at school.

Recognising and Combating Discrimination

help children see racism and oppose it

It requires an understanding that making a meaningful difference in the lives of children means helping them in developmentally appropriate ways to begin to recognise racism and discrimination and to work effectively against them (Derman-Sparks, 1988). It does not mean ignoring racism and discrimination or assuming that children are incapable of recognising them or too young to do something constructive in response to them.

attitudes towards difference develop early

Helping children to learn about similarities and differences is not enough. It is attitudes toward differences (Phillips, 1988) that cause problems. Some of the concepts in the anti-bias curriculum (Derman-Sparks, 1988), developed over the past few years at Pacific Oaks College, apply to the treatment of a multicultural perspective. It begins with the recognition that children notice differences around the age of two and therefore can begin to learn attitudes about those differences. They learn prejudice from the attitudes that exist in society and not from contact with people from diverse cultures. While all children do not have contact with people from other cultures, they all have contact with the attitudes prevalent in society. They are likely to develop what Derman-Sparks and Jones (1988: 11) label pre-prejudice, "ideas, feelings, and acts that reflect misconceptions, discomforts, and fears about differences".

acknowledge differences

Step one in the anti-bias curriculum is to acknowledge differences of all kinds that exist within a group of children. These would include gender differences, those relating to special needs, cultural, racial, and language differences, and individual differences (skin tone, hair type, height, for example). Children learn that gender has

to do with body parts and little or nothing to do with skills, interests, or expression of feeling. They learn that skin colour is inherited and that within cultures, even within families, there is great variation in skin colour. They learn that children with disabilities are not frightening or to be avoided. It is important to communicate to children a positive valuing of these differences. Obviously, to do this well adults need to be comfortable with who they are. This is not so easy because many adults have never addressed differences directly and are uncomfortable with them.

recognise and deal with unfair behaviour — strategies

Step two is to recognise unfair or hurtful behaviour and develop a variety of ways to deal with it, through stories as well as situations that occur.

Step three involves taking action against discriminatory situations, helping children think critically and take creative action. The developers of the anti-bias curriculum state their aims in the following way:

I want children to learn to discriminate, to make judgments about what's fair and what's not, to sort out what they have the power to change and what they can't do anything about . . . We want children to become effective thinkers and problem solvers, not acceptors of dogma; actors, rather than passive victims. (Derman-Sparks, 1988:9,10)

For the Entire Program

It is for all aspects of the program and for all the time. It is not offering a "tourist curriculum" (Derman-Sparks, 1988), which teaches through artifacts and holidays, where the things to do with other cultures are distinct from the mainstream program, and the dominant culture is not treated as a culture.

integral and ongoing

A perspective that acknowledges cultural and linguistic diversity pervades the entire program on an ongoing basis. It is not something tacked on or done on a particular day or at a particular time or that is singled out for special attention.

MISCONCEPTION: "Adopt a multicultural perspective — you've got to be kidding! We're flat out just getting through the day — we can't possibly add another thing!"

our way is only one way

Making a big fuss over isolated items, customs and celebrations from another culture out of context or with little or no explanation, even with the best of intentions, may have the opposite effect to what is intended. It may highlight differences and lend to "our" way of doing things an inaccurate sense of rightness in children's minds. There is a vast and very significant difference between focusing on, for example, the fact that Dutch children wear wooden shoes, and a focus on the many different ways people cover their feet and the reasons behind those differences. The former establishes a "we-they" dichotomy — we (in the mainstream culture) wear "normal" or proper shoes, but in some other countries they wear "funny" kinds of shoes.

Children need to become effective thinkers and problem solvers.

"Visitors come to the centre and stand around as though they are waiting for something 'multicultural' to happen. I feel like saying to them, 'You're standing in it — it is done through things that are here all the time — we have a multicultural perspective in everything we do.'"

(Child Care Worker)

The "tourist curriculum" contrasts with natural integration of aspects of other cultures.

The tourist curriculum both patronizes, emphasizing the "exotic" differences between cultures, and trivializes, dealing not with the real-life problems and experiences of different peoples but with surface aspects of their celebrations and modes of entertainment. Children "visit" non-white cultures and then "go home" to the daily classroom that reflects only the dominant culture.

(Derman-Sparks, 1988: 8)

A multicultural perspective in child care should draw heavily on the lifestyles and customs of families from diverse cultural backgrounds living in the wider community.

Sensitive Treatment of Diversity

is integral rather than superficial

It involves sensitive and substantive treatment of diversity and aspects of other cultures. It is not simply a matter of focusing on "exotica".

does not focus on the exotica

There is more to a multicultural perspective than meets the eye. Some attempts to offer a multicultural perspective are little more than window dressing, with heavy reliance placed on inclusion of artifacts, cultural relics, and other "exotica" and either

A multicultural perspective must be more than window dressing.

ignoring language differences or treating them as problems or novelties. A centre that acknowledges cultural and linguistic diversity will have some obvious material manifestations from a variety of cultures, but a multicultural perspective goes far beyond that. As someone has said, a multicultural perspective in child care is a lot more than "chopsticks and sombreros" (Hopson, 1989a).

For All Children

It is for all children. It is not something to be done only if children from minority cultures are in the centre and is not for them alone.

for all children in all centres

In answer to a question asked about what a multicultural perspective in child care is, a worker replied, "It's something you have to do for a few weeks until the child settles in and learns English". That point of view is exactly the opposite to that promoted in this book. The assumption is that a multicultural perspective is for all children, not just those from non-English speaking or other minority backgrounds. It is not something remedial required when a centre "has the problem of having non-English speaking children attending" but something that benefits and enriches the lives of all involved — staff, families, and children. The often heard line, "We don't need to have a multicultural program, we don't have any ethnics" makes no sense. In fact, a strong argument could be made that a service that has only white Anglo-Australian staff, families, and children has a particular need for the incorporation of a multicultural perspective.

begin with diversity within the community

When there are no children from other than Anglo-Australian backgrounds in the centre, it would make sense to "share" the cultures and languages in the local community. When there are families from other cultures using the centre, as there will be in most communities, aspects of their culture and language should be given priority, along with attention to other manifestations of cultural and linguistic diversity.

and in the centre

"The main difference it makes to a multicultural perspective when you have families from other cultures in the centre is that you start with them." (Child Care Centre Director)

When multiculturalism is thought not to be for 'us' but for 'them', policies which promote it are not likely to be very seriously conceived or resourced. (Yeatman, 1988: 56)

. . . White children growing up in a racist environment, where their attitudes and stereotypes are supported rather than challenged, are as much victims as their black peers. Moreover, a multi-racial community offers a wealth of experience which if denied these children, can only make them the poorer. We should therefore be preparing all our children to live in a multi-racial community on a basis of equality, whilst respecting the differences between people. (Moodley, 1983:12)

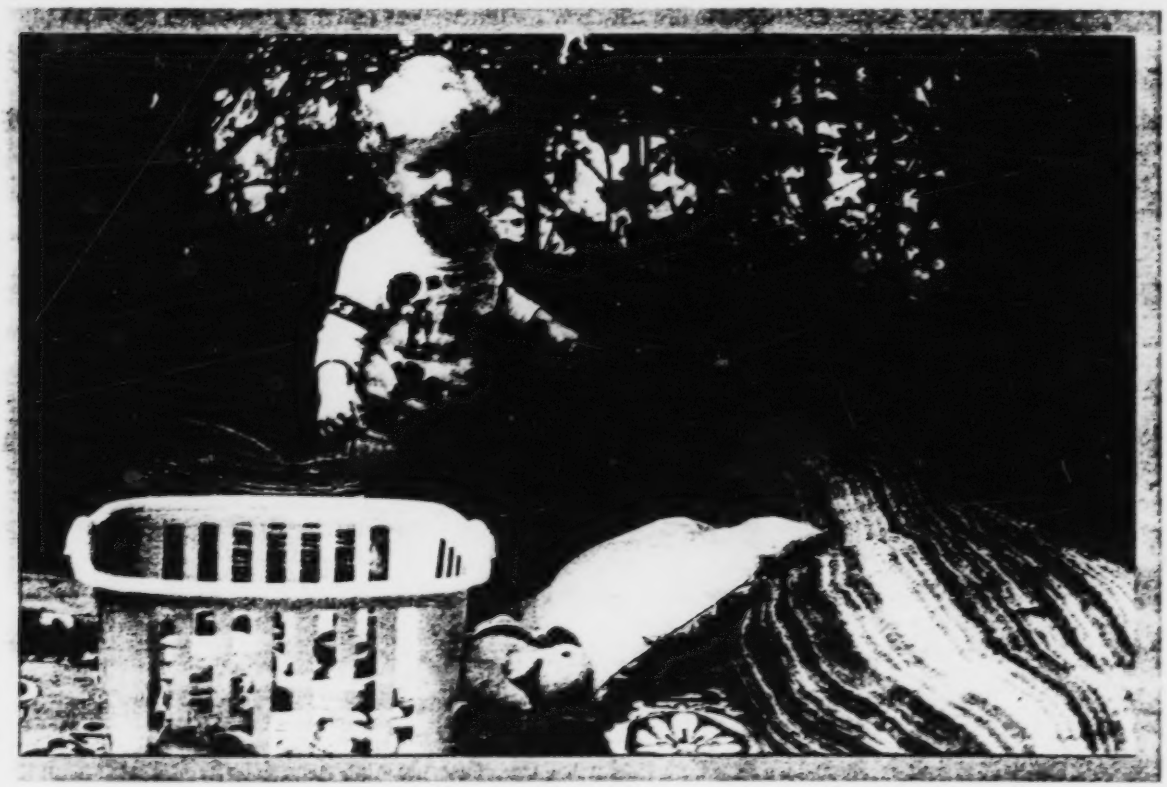
Children who are the direct targets of discriminatory attitudes and stereotypes need to have an environment that challenges discrimination in all its forms and enables them to develop the self confidence needed to develop their skills and abilities unrestricted by stereotypes and prejudice. Children who are not the direct targets of a particular form of discrimination need to be able to develop an openness and respect for difference and an ability to question and challenge discrimination. (Greater London Council, 1986:8)

Enriching and Fun

It enriches the program, is fun. It is not an extra burden for staff or a problem to be solved.

We should prepare all our children to live in a multicultural community.

MISCONCEPTION: "We are lucky — all of our children were born in this country and so they know European [sic] ways."



a positive outlook helps

The aim of this book is to de-mystify concepts of a multicultural perspective in children's services, to allay people's fears and uncertainties, to encourage those who have doubts. Rather than being a problem to be solved, or a challenge to face, offering a multicultural perspective is positive and enriching for all involved. An enthusiastic outlook about it is, as with most things, essential to its success.

Natural Incorporation of Variety

diverse experiences from many cultures

It involves incorporating naturally into the centre's practices and physical environment a rich variety of experiences and materials from diverse cultures. A multicultural perspective does not rely mainly on extensive knowledge of other cultures in order to help children learn about cultures as such.

MISCONCEPTION: "Our children are too young to learn about culture."

Child care personnel may use as an excuse for not adopting a multicultural perspective their lack of knowledge or the lack of resources or time to find out about other cultures. This should not necessarily be a deterrent. Young children do not understand the concept of culture. "Doing" other cultures, offering isolated or even a series of connected experiences labelled as ethnic, is not what this perspective is all about. Openness to diversity and a willingness to search for resources are much more important.

be sure that information is accurate

While it is true that staff do not have to be authorities on different cultures to offer a multicultural perspective, it must be said that some caution needs to be exercised when using clothing, artifacts, dances, or other aspects of a culture about which one has little understanding. One runs the risk of being out of date, of stereotyping, or at worst, being offensive. There is a need to check on the appropriateness of what is being offered.

Phillips (1988:44) writes about the need to move beyond looking at cultures:

My belief is that culture is not the problem, nor that differences are, nor that diversity is a root cause of inequality. It is the response to these that is.

Rather than <u>difference</u> itself, it is the response to difference that is the problem. Rather than <u>culture</u> itself, it is the attitudes about culture that are the problem.

Rather than <u>diversity</u> itself, it is the ways in which the major institutions of this country have responded to culturally, racially, and ethnically diverse people that is the major source of our condition of social, political, and economic inequality.

Language is Critical

focus on culture and language

It requires acceptance that language is a critically important component of a multicultural perspective, and at the same time that a multicultural perspective incorporates much more than just the language needs of children whose first language is not English. It is not a matter of focusing separately or exclusively on needs related either to language or cultural background and ignoring the other.

Language is inseparable from culture and self-identity. However, it must not be overlooked that families from other English speaking cultures may also bring customs, practices, diversity — manifestations of a culture — to the centre.

MISCONCEPTION: "We don't need to worry about being multicultural — all of our children speak English."

Staff and Families

...ff and families from ...ther cultures can make a ...difference

It is assisted greatly by the presence of staff and families from minority cultures. It is not achieved automatically by having staff or families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in the centre.

MISCONCEPTION: "We run a multicultural program — our children are multicultural."

The extent to which a centre has a multicultural perspective relies on what is or is not done to acknowledge the diversity of the people involved in the centre.

Developmental Appropriateness

It ensures that priority is given to the developmental appropriateness of experiences and materials used in the program. It is not sacrificing developmental appropriateness for the sake of cultural and linguistic diversity.

...e basis for good ...hild care practice

In other words, just because a material or an activity or an experience is from another culture, it is not necessarily appropriate. This is another point that is easy to state and difficult to act upon. In their zeal to incorporate diversity, it would be easy for child care personnel to use materials, stories and books, and activities that have little intrinsic merit for children but simply represent something a bit different. Quality care starts with responding sensitively to the needs of children.

The Centre and the Wider Community

It will embrace staff, parents and the community. It does not stop with what is offered to children in the centre.

...odel desirable ...ehaviour

Staff in their interactions, not only with children but also with their colleagues and the children's families, need to model what they are trying to help children learn about relating to other people. This includes caring, respect, negotiation and willingness to compromise.

MISCONCEPTION: "If we accommodated all the parents' requests because of their cultural background, we'd be doing things as many different ways as we have families."

A parent who uses a centre with a strong multicultural perspective said, "The best thing about this centre is that it draws out of people — staff, children, and parents — all that they have to offer".

A Multicultural Perspective

is	*is not*
a positive attitude toward diversity	getting children to "fit in"
	trying to get rid of difference
	a view of other cultures as deprived
	viewing difference as deficit
acceptance that there is no one right way	a view that our way is the right way
focus on similarities and commonalities as well as differences	"colorblindness"
moving beyond differences to look at attitudes toward differences	looking superficially at differences without asking why
acknowledgement of bias and prejudice in self and others	denial of prejudice
helping children to recognise racism and discrimination and work effectively against them	assuming that children are too young to see racism and discrimination and counter them
pervasive throughout the life or the centre	a "tourist curriculum"
	something tacked on, something extra
present all the time	present only at specific times just for children from minority cultures
enriching, fun	a problem to be solved
incorporation of a variety of aspects of diverse cultures	"doing" a culture or country
natural incorporation of other cultures	making a fuss over experiences and materials from other cultures
sensitive and meaningful treatment of diversity and aspects of other cultures	focusing on the obvious, "exotica" window dressing

attention to language as part of culture	treating language or culture in isolation
acknowledging and incorporating the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of staff and families	just a matter of having people from other cultures in the centre
putting a priority on developmental appropriateness	sacrificing or compromising developmental appropriateness for the sake of being "multicultural"
encompassing families and community	just a set of activities for children
drawing on experiences from the daily lives of the people in the community	attention to times long ago and places far away

4 Partnership with Parents

essential for quality care

Building bridges between staff and families and forming a partnership with them on behalf of the child is at the heart of the provision of quality care. The reasons for this are several.

- The family is the most significant influence on a child's development and well-being; consequently, working well with a child means working with the family and nurturing a strong parent-child relationship.

ensures continuity

- Continuity between home and care is vital for a young child to develop and learn well.

provides vital information

- When parents and staff do not share information about the child, each is relating to the child without the whole picture, and each may have different assumptions without realising it.

enriches the centre

- The contributions parents can make to all aspects of the program are many and varied. Rather than being an extra task or burden, partnership with parents brings many rewards and benefits, not the least of which is that informed parents are likely to become strong advocates for the centre and for quality care.

takes many forms

Parents who use child care are busy, as are people who work in child care. Neither group has much extra time. The types of involvement proposed here do not require great amounts of time. They do not rely on attendance at meetings or participation in management of the service, although these are good ways for parents to be involved.

Characteristics of the Partnership

A partnership between parents and child care staff has the same characteristics that any partnership must have:

- common goals;
- lack of competitiveness, willingness to work together;
- mutual respect and trust, good will, liking for each other;
- commitment to sharing information;
- frequent and effective communication;
- openness, understanding of the other's perspective;
- shared responsibility.

Continuity between home and care is vital for a child to develop and learn well.

Making it Work

Staff must take the initiative

While a partnership requires shared responsibility, in child care it is the staff who have the responsibility to take the initiative to establish and maintain a partnership with parents, if for no other reason than that they are in the positions of power. Staff who value the parent-staff partnership will make an active effort to discover ways that will make parents collectively, as well as individually, feel a sense of belonging to the centre.

Value contributions

EXAMPLE: A child care worker in one of the centres used to collect information for this book was able to list specific ways she had encouraged many parents in her group to make a contribution, such as sending in a favourite family recipe, bringing Sri Lankan relatives in to dance for the children, making a video to show at a parents' night or contributing equipment for the home corner.

Requires mutual respect and understanding

In all of the centres in which the author spent time collecting information for this book, the outstanding feature in all cases was the partnership with parents. The centres were truly open to parents and that message came through clearly even to a visitor. There were no signs of a "them-us" attitude toward parents. As has been said about working with children, working effectively with parents begins with respect, with acceptance of individual differences and that means acceptance of and respect even for parents viewed by staff as difficult, demanding and critical. It is not uncommon for some parents to communicate with staff in ways that are not understood or liked. If staff are honest with themselves, they will admit that it is considerably easier to respect and like children than adults.

EXAMPLE: In a staff meeting several staff were being very critical of a parent, who happened to be from a non-English speaking background. They complained that he never seemed to have anything to say to staff, that in spite of many overtures from them, he appeared uninterested. The person in charge of the group, who has a serious commitment to partnership with parents, pointed out to the staff that this father was the person who had contributed some Indonesian puppets and other materials that he bought for the centre on his latest trip to his own country. The other staff had been unaware of this and appeared impressed and surprised.

recognise diversity within and between cultures

When there are families from non-English speaking backgrounds, or for that matter, English speaking migrants, using the centre, the challenges may vary somewhat from those when all families come from an Anglo-Australian background. These parents may be more reticent, because of language differences or uncertainty about what to expect. They may be living with additional stresses that compete with their children for attention, such as learning the language, finding work, being without extended family, adjusting to a different culture, dealing with racism. However, there is tremendous diversity within Anglo-Australian families, and therefore a variety of challenges to be met in forming partnerships with them. Families from other cultural and linguistic backgrounds present no more challenges as a group than do Anglo-Australians, although they may present different challenges. Most of the challenges presented by opening the centre to parents can be overcome when there is an attitude of respect, commitment to communicate and professionalism.

talk with parents

Obviously, in order for staff to be partners with parents, they must have ongoing discussion about centre philosophy and practices and about the need to work together with parents.

know what is negotiable

They will need to be clear about the many areas where acceding to parents' requests is important and the few areas where compromise is not possible. For example, staff cannot agree to requests by parents that physical punishment be used on their child. They are likely to agree to parents' requests that their child not participate in celebration of a holiday for religious reasons. However, there are a number of occasions where what is best for the child in the long run is not obvious and requires careful consideration and discussion by staff and parents together.

EXAMPLE: When a single parent requests that her child be woken up from his sleep early so that he will go to bed at a reasonable hour in the evening to allow the mother to study, it is not immediately obvious what is ultimately in the child's best interests, and a solution requires negotiation, compromise, and good will on the part of parents and staff.

In the Beginning

parents may be uncertain

Many parents have no choice but to use child care, and many communities, because the demand for care is so much greater than the supply, have no choice about which service they use. Similarly, many parents will come to child care not knowing what to expect, what questions to ask. This may be particularly true for families from other cultures, as child care centres may not exist in their country of origin. Even if there are child care centres in their country of origin, it may still be expected that the extended family would provide the child care. What may appear to staff as lack of interest or concern about the quality of care may reflect lack of knowledge of what to ask or what is expected of them.

information and openness build confidence

Parents' first contact with the centre sets the stage for the partnership. Staff promote this through:

- welcoming parents in a friendly way;
- sharing information freely about the service;
- showing a genuine interest in the child and the family without prying. Some important information will be shared only after trust is established;

  EXAMPLE: Asking tactfully among other things, about the language spoken at home, food preferences, and religious practices in the initial interview gives parents the idea that their child will be treated as an individual, not just one member of a group.
- understanding that parents are likely to be feeling somewhat uncomfortable;

share expectations

- making clear mutual responsibilities that is, what parents can expect from the centre, and what the centre expects from parents;

welcome questions

- demonstrating that parents' questions are welcomed, their requests respected;
- indicating a variety of ways parents can be involved in the life of the centre.

It is a tremendous help to have all of this information in written form in appropriate languages to support what is communicated verbally, but a booklet or handout is no substitute for warm, personal communication.

On a Continuing Basis

be welcoming

The initial messages of welcome given to parents will be believed only if they are reinforced in daily practice. Parents will gradually get the message that they are welcome, that the centre is their place too and a partnership will be formed. It is not so much a matter of saying it rather it is a matter of putting it into practice, demonstrating it.

Some ways that staff can assist the formation of a partnership with parents follow.

MAKING INFORMATION ACCESSIBLE TO PARENTS, IN THEIR FIRST LANGUAGE WHEREVER POSSIBLE:

make information available

- letting them know about staff changes ahead of time;
- displaying photos and names of the staff;
- providing all parents with minutes of management committee meetings;
- displaying the program, recently developed policies, lunch and sleep charts for their perusal, and discussing these with them occasionally;
- keeping a notebook on each child, where periodically staff and parents exchange written information about the child's interests, developmental milestones, interesting anecdotes (a supplement to, not a substitute for, verbal communication);
- a daily diary of highlights of the day displayed in the foyer.

tell parents what's happening

EXAMPLE: One centre posts News for Today, written large for quick and easy reading on butchers' paper, outside the door at going home time each day. Staff take responsibility for preparing it on a weekly roster. What is significant about this exercise is not just that it is done, but the tone of it. It communicates delight in the children.

NEWS FOR TODAY

Considering it has been such a miserable day, we have coped very well. Children have been happy, especially Laura who had a birthday yesterday.

First activity this morning was making our own play dough in two colours, yellow and green. Then Berra made her wonderful breakfast and shared it with us, with special tea called chai, bread and jam (made from rose petals), and olives. Matthew and Tom R. ate the most. They really enjoyed them and a special cheese that followed. Everyone had a wonderful time.

Music was fun, with Berra and Betty helping us to sing Spanish and Turkish songs and games.

The story for older children was "The Hungry Spider" and due to the wet day we have had many stories. Late afternoon activities are sand play, chalk drawing, assorted games, stories, and music.

Have a dry and lovely evening everyone.

EXAMPLE: One parent interviewed said that although she did not have the time to be very involved in the centre, she felt very reassured by the openness of the staff. "I know they have nothing to hide" she stated.

be sensitive and respectful

Staff may need to monitor the ways they convey information to parents and to whom they give information. It is critical that parents are given needed or requested

Parents' first contact with the centre sets the stage for partnership.

information in a non-patronising and tactful way. Staff may be more likely to leave parents from other cultures alone, not intervening when advice or assistance would be helpful. This is sometimes because of lack of confidence, but sometimes is based on a belief that intervention may represent interference with culturally based practices. The following quote illustrates this misconception.

Don't jump to conclusions

"I realise now that for a long time I was treating parents from non-English speaking backgrounds quite differently from Anglo-Australian parents. Any time there was evidence that perhaps they could do with some information about some aspect of child rearing or child development, I would think, "It's probably their culture" and that would give me an excuse to do nothing about it, whereas if it was an Anglo-Australian parent, I would say something. The example I remember related to parents giving their children lots of junk food. I'd be much more likely to give the 'Anglo-Aussies' information about nutrition and leave the others alone. I realise now that this was a kind of discrimination. I did it with good motives — I didn't want to impose our ways on them — but I now see that just because they come from a different culture doesn't mean that they have all the answers, that they couldn't benefit from some good solid information if it's presented in a sensitive way." (Child Care Centre Director)

Treat all parents equally

WELCOMING PARENTS INTO THE ROOM, MAKING THEM FEEL COMFORTABLE RATHER THAN AN INTRUSION OR A NUISANCE.

Respond to requests

EXAMPLE: A small but significant symbol that bridges exist between care and home was a note that the cook in a centre had on her notice board. The note was from a parent and it read, "Can you please write down the recipe for the rice dish that

you served on Thursday. Sally has mentioned it several times, and I would like to make it at home. Thanks". The note was left on the notice board after the recipe was provided, presumably because the cook was pleased to have been asked.

make time for parents

One staff member identified making time for parents as a challenge she had to face when she came to work in a centre where partnership with parents was a priority. She said, "That's the hardest thing, to look relaxed, to make time for parents, when you have lots of other things.to do. It really is a matter of sorting out your priorities".

use photos of families

EXAMPLE: Photos of children's families in the room are welcoming and help children feel secure. One director spoke of a boy who had little or no English and seldom spoke but made a point of taking all visitors over to the photos and pointing out the one of his family. The presence of the photo was obviously very important to him.

SHARING WITH PARENTS STAFF'S RESPECT FOR AND PLEASURE IN THEIR CHILD.

tell parents about their child

A parent interviewed commented, "The thing I like is that they make me feel that my child is the most special one in the centre, and yet I know that they make other parents feel that way too".

BEING OPEN ABOUT PRACTICE, ASKING FOR ADVICE WHEN DECISIONS ARE BEING MADE ABOUT THE PROGRAM AND ENGAGING IN MUTUAL PROBLEM SOLVING.

involve parents in making centre policies

EXAMPLE: One centre involves parents in a particular group within the centre to develop, in conjunction with staff, policies for the operation of the room, for example, on discipline, routines, or visitors. This is an excellent way for parents to be involved as well as helping them to understand the complexity of operating a program of high quality.

talk about the centre's program

EXAMPLE: Organising a parents' night where parents participate in the sorts of activities children engage in at the centre achieves several aims. This experience gives the staff an opportunity to talk not only about the value of certain types of activities, it also allows them to bring up issues such as how children feel when they do not understand the language used in the centre or when they are new and do not know anyone or the expectations people have of them.

SHARING INFORMATION WITH PARENTS ABOUT THEIR CHILD AND ENCOURAGING PARENTS TO SHARE THEIR INSIGHTS WITH STAFF; SHARING DECISION MAKING WITH PARENTS ABOUT THEIR CHILD.

share decision making

EXAMPLE: One parent gave an example of solving a problem with the help of staff. Her young toddler would not eat breakfast in the morning, and this was becoming a source of great tension for this mother and her child. She discussed it with the staff, it was decided that perhaps the problem was that the child was being rushed. The solution settled on was that breakfast could be brought to the centre, and the child could eat it in a more leisurely atmosphere.

BEING APPROACHABLE AND WELCOMING OF CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM.

be open to critical comments

A suggestion box, or a yearly or half yearly questionnaire for parents to respond to anonymously, further reinforces the idea that suggestions are welcomed. Parents will be more honest if they are asked to give feedback in a way that does not threaten them, as they may feel that if they are going to be identified they have to say what staff want to hear.

acknowledge suggestions

One parent said, "The key thing is that I feel at ease with staff, I can ask them anything".

TRYING TO SEE THINGS FROM THE PARENTS' PERSPECTIVE, ESPECIALLY WHEN DIFFERENCES OR TENSIONS ARISE.

try putting yourself in the parent's position

EXAMPLE: Parents are encouraged to ring up during the day to see how their child is getting on. Staff give honest, though optimistic, reports when parents do ring. They do not criticise and are not condescending toward those parents who, for a variety of reasons, ring up regularly.

BEING HONEST WITH PARENTS ABOUT CHALLENGES OR OBSTACLES TO QUALITY IN THE SERVICE.

be honest

One of the very positive benefits of having parents as partners is that they become a centre's strongest advocates and supporters.

GETTING TO KNOW PARENTS AS PEOPLE, NOT JUST AS PARENTS.

know parents as people

EXAMPLE: Social occasions are a great leveller. Family occasions with food and music, sometimes with a cultural theme, are times for staff and families to get to know each other in a relaxed setting. Two of the centres visited for this project, both with a large number of non-English speaking background families, said that their most successful family social occasion was a Bush Dance! This fits nicely with the concept that Australian customs are part of a multicultural perspective too!

How Parents Can Help

there are many different ways

Partnership as described in the preceding pages is the most important way for parents to contribute. Inevitably in centres where there is a partnership with parents, there are many ways for parents to assist. The contribution of each parent is valued, and fixed notions about what the ideal parent contributes are noticeably absent.

an individual approach is helpful

Finding out the particular talents and interests of parents and issuing a specific invitation to them to participate in the program is likely to be more successful than simply a general invitation to become involved. Ways that are meaningful and comfortable for a variety of parents should be offered. As parents become more comfortable in the centre, they are likely to participate more actively.

doing meaningful tasks is important

Hendrick is writing about school, but her point applies to child care as well:

Over and over I have witnessed teachers asking mothers to wipe off tables or help in the kitchen or letting them simply stand around, smiling a lot, but knowing in their hearts their time is being wasted. Visitors may prefer simple tasks in the beginning because they are familiar, not threatening, and because they do not want to make waves or antagonize the teacher. However, keeping them at such tasks is fundamentally denigrating, teaches children that parents are not important at school, and deprives children of the unique contribution such people can make if properly acknowledged. (1988:261)

ask them for suggestions and advice

Teachers who seek out parents because they value their practical experience with their children will find that this approach reduces the parents' feelings of defensiveness when the teacher happens to be better educated or better paid. (Hendrick,1988:263)

In addition to encouraging parents to come in throughout the year, one centre has found that some parents respond to the designation of a particular week as Parents' Week, when all parents are encouraged to do something at the centre. According to the staff, this often is the first step leading to involvement and participation at other times of the year.

Cooking with children or providing favourite recipes that can be incorporated into the centre's menu is a pleasant and non threatening way to involve some parents. One centre made a recipe book containing recipes from a variety of cultures contributed by parents, and they presented copies to parents as a Christmas gift.

Other tasks that parents might want to do include the following:

- Welcoming and orientating new parents, encouraging their participation and that of other parents.
- Contributing junk materials.

Occasions with food are times to get to know each other.

- Linking the centre and families with other community resources. Parents can often make helpful contacts for the centre through their work, community organisations they belong to, and friends.
- Assisting in the care of the children.
- Participating on sub-committees for a particular purpose. The management committee and the centre benefit from involving parent non-members in projects where they can contribute.
- Fund raising.

  EXAMPLE: Fund raising is often more attractive to parents when it is for a particular purpose, particularly one they have chosen. One of the centres used for this project involved parents very successfully in raising funds to bring in performers and artists to entertain the children.
- Having a small group of children visit them in their home. This has been very successfully done for several years in one of the centres used in this project.

use their special skills

Each centre will have its own unique set of such tasks. In addition, there are particular contributions that parents from other cultures can make. The following list is from the *Community Child Care Newsletter* Victoria (1985:12).

- Write signs and notices for the centre in their language.

- Contact other parents from their culture to encourage them to participate.
- Use their language with all children in the centre.
- Collect and provide resources about their culture, that is, pictures and costumes of their country of origin, taped songs, children's stories and games.
- Provide recipes.
- Introduce older family members, such as grandparents, to the centre so that they can contribute.
- Give talks at parent meetings about their own perception of their culture, their child rearing practices, their own childhood experiences.
- Share with staff their expectations of the child care centre.

Participation on the Management Committee

one way to participate

Parent participation in the management of child care centres is vitally important. However, it cannot substitute for partnership as outlined previously, and it is not necessarily appropriate for all parents. If any parent is pressured to be on the management committee and feels uncomfortable, lacks skills, or does not understand the jargon or meeting procedure, the effect may be to disempower that parent, to damage the partnership.

when parents are ready

In centres that are keen to cater well for families from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, parents from non-English speaking backgrounds are often pressured to participate in management. Whether it is made explicit or not, their role is often seen as being the representative of all parents from non-English speaking backgrounds. If they feel uncomfortable in the role, they may not be effective. Consequently they do not feel good about it, nor do they make as valuable a contribution as they might if they felt more comfortable. The result is that their presence on the management committee, if they cannot contribute, is patronising and tokenistic and runs counter to the thrust of a true multicultural perspective.

provides essential information

The other side of this is that if where there are parents who are interested in participating in management, they will need support from staff, and some parents will need a bit of encouragement. In addition, the perspective of parents from non-English speaking backgrounds is vital for the effective operation of a centre.

meet when parents can come

One practical suggestion from a director, which is likely to increase interest and participation, is not to hold the annual general meeting or the elections at the beginning of the year, when many parents are new and just getting to know the centre and each other.

When There are Non-English Speaking Families

a wonderful resource exists

Quite obviously, it is much easier to have a truly multicultural perspective when there are families and staff who are from other than the Anglo-Australian culture. They are tremendous resources for the program, and simply their presence is of great value. Services that have those families and value them are much the richer for it.

special challenges exist

A multicultural perspective is an application of principles of quality care. However, it would be simplistic to overlook the special considerations and challenges to be faced when families from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds use the service.

CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY ATTRACTS FAMILIES AND STAFF

Probably the most attractive aspect of a centre to families from other cultures is the presence of staff and families from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. While the presence of people from one's own culture may be considered ideal, some families are attracted to a situation where there is a mix of people from diverse backgrounds, where, as one parent put it, "You don't feel as though you or your children stand out because everybody is different". So for centres wanting to attract more culturally diverse families, the first challenge is to recruit several families or to employ someone from another culture to be on the staff. There will be further discussion of this in the sections on staff and getting started with a multicultural perspective.

Parents from other cultures make a special contribution to the centre.

THE LANGUAGE BARRIER CAN BE BROKEN

qualified translators are necessary

For parents who speak little or no English, obviously interpreters are necessary. Other parents or staff may be used, or an interpreter service if available. Care must be taken when getting material translated, for concepts may be distorted and incorrect information transmitted. It is critically important that translations are done by people who are qualified to translate and who will liaise with staff who understand the meaning of what is being translated.

use parents' languages

Written material in other languages (policy booklets, application forms, explanations of the curriculum) are helpful. Having notices and greetings up in a variety of languages gives an important message to parents about the respect and acceptance afforded language and culture.

When staff learn a few words in the family's first language it opens the door to communication and partnership and it conveys to the parents an important message about staff's willingness to meet them half way. Less than perfect pronunciation is not a problem, as parents will appreciate seeing staff struggle with language and not get it right!

interpreters at meetings help

Attendance and participation at meetings is likely to increase if parents are designated at meetings to interpret for a particular language group, even if the majority of that group speak English. People are much more likely to state an opinion if they can do so in their own language. This means obviously that the pace of the meeting will be slower. It is important that all parents appreciate this (*Community Child Care Newsletter* Victoria 1985).

GENERALISATIONS AND STEREOTYPES INTERFERE WITH THE PARTNERSHIP

stereotypes are never helpful

People within a culture live, dress, eat, travel, and rear their children in a variety of ways. Any doubts about that can be laid to rest by thinking about the difficulty of, for example, generalising about Australian child rearing practices, or Australian houses. Sensitive staff will monitor themselves to ensure that they are not making assumptions about children or their parents because of their cultural background. In addition, the differences in beliefs and practices within a culture attributable to class and generation may be greater than those between cultures.

As well, there is a tremendous risk in basing practices, information, activities, and selection of materials from other cultures on what has been read in books or what someone experienced when they visited that country some time ago, or on notions collected from the media. The risks are that:

- they are outdated, do not apply to contemporary life in that culture;
- they are incorrect;
- they are offensive;
- they are stereotypical;
- they do not apply to the lives of people from other cultures living in Australia today.

A multicultural perspective in child care is about incorporating diversity that is meaningful to children's daily lives and experiences and is not about outdated or inaccurate information that will lead them to have inappropriate ideas.

KNOWING PARENTS' EXPECTATIONS HELPS.

experience shapes expectations

Yeatman (1988) cites research that indicates that some parents from non-English speaking backgrounds may not distinguish between child care and school — in other words, they may assume that their children will be taught to read and write and will be participating in a very structured program which is not found in child care programs of high quality. It is important to know what parents expect, especially when their expectations cannot be met, so that staff can explain the program to them. Many parents may be basing their expectations on their own childhood experience which will have been very different from that of their children (Steele, 1989).

PARENTS CAN BE RESOURCES AND TEACHERS FOR STAFF.

Parents are great sources of information about their culture. Using them as sources has three major benefits:

- it empowers them;
- it gives them a feeling of belonging;
- it ensures that what is included from their culture is relevant to them.

EXAMPLE: One centre developed the idea of "Long Ago Books". Parents from other cultures were asked to talk about how their children would live if they had stayed in the place their parents came from, and this was recorded. The child care worker who did this reported that parents were hesitant to begin with, but once they began, the challenge became condensing all that they had to say into a single story suitable for children. Parents also had to approve the illustrations, which further empowered them.

Sensitive staff will not make assumptions about children because of their background.

PARENTS MAY NEED ENCOURAGEMENT AND SUPPORT TO NURTURE THEIR CHILD'S APPRECIATION OF THEIR LANGUAGE AND CULTURE.

foster the first language

The large majority of parents want to do what is best for their child. Unfortunately, because of pressures placed on them by the larger society, many parents from non-English speaking backgrounds may believe that the best way to help their child "get ahead" is to speak English and to drop other aspects of their own culture. They may be surprised, and most will be relieved and delighted, to learn not only that they should continue to speak their first language to the child, but also that children who are exposed to more than one culture are actually advantaged. Written information on this important topic that they can share with others may be helpful.

EXAMPLE: Staff noticed that a native French speaking parent had suddenly stopped speaking French to her young son. A staff member brought this up tactfully and said that it would be beneficial in the long run if she continued to use her first language with him. The mother seemed pleased to receive the information, and said she was under a lot of pressure from her parents to speak only English. The centre had a brochure on the merits of maintaining the first language and gave it to the mother to share with the child's grandparents. The mother said later that they had been convinced.

Once the merits of maintaining and developing the first language have been communicated, however, there may be some parents who will still insist that their child speak only English. Centre staff will have to decide what is in the child's best interests in the long run.

Welcoming the culture and the language into the centre through the parents and in other ways is a powerful means of letting the parents know that their culture and language are valued.

IT IS VITAL THAT STAFF HAVE INFORMATION ABOUT THE COMMUNITY CONTEXT IN WHICH FAMILIES FROM OTHER CULTURES LIVE.

know about the local community

Is there a strong sense of ethnic identity within the cultural group and within this particular family? Is this cultural group the victim of a substantial amount of racism? For a variety of reasons, families will differ greatly in their beliefs about the extent they want their child to integrate into the majority culture in the community. Some families may find it offensive if child care staff assumed that they identified strongly with their culture.

THERE ARE MANY REASONS OTHER THAN CULTURE OR RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND SUCH AS MEDICAL, LIFESTYLE, PERSONAL PREFERENCE THAT MAY LEAD PARENTS TO MAKE SPECIAL REQUESTS ON BEHALF OF THEIR CHILD.

special request have reasons

It may be easy for staff to make the error of taking more notice of the requests that come from parents from other cultures and labelling them as particularly demanding, especially if there is the expectation that they will be difficult. This obviously prevents the establishment of a partnership.

One child care centre director interviewed asserted that the major determinant of the number of specific requests a parent makes is not cultural or religious background but age of the child — that is, that parents of under two year olds are much more likely to make requests than parents of older children.

EXAMPLE: Several families did not want their children participating in water play in cold weather. The staff offered those children a large basin of fine sand out of sight of the water table as an alternative, as it gave similar opportunities for sensory play, pouring, filling, and measuring.

EXAMPLE: A parent had a very specific request related to putting her baby to sleep. She requested that the bottle be propped and that the child not be patted or otherwise touched. As this was the woman's fourth child, the child care worker felt that there was little likelihood of persuading her to compromise. Her response was to do as requested, but she stayed with the child until she went to sleep, ensuring that the bottle was not in her mouth while she slept.

The worry that some child care staff have, that a multicultural approach means constantly having to adapt and individualise practices, seems unfounded. In the centres used to collect information for this book this was not the case. While staff in each centre, when asked, could provide the author with a few examples of occasions where practices had to be adapted for cultural or religious reasons, this was not a major problem. It seems that when the centre is open to parents, when there is a partnership and shared decision making, trust develops and parents do not need to make so many special requests.

"I trust them, so I don't need to be always checking to see what they are doing. I know that if there is something that really matters to me, they will listen. Also, if something important comes up about my child, I know they will discuss it with me." (Parent)

STAFF CAN BE A RESOURCE FOR PARENTS.

Once a trusting, caring relationship has been established with parents, centre staff can play an important role in putting parents in touch with other resources in the

centres can be a source of information

community. This point may be particularly relevant for parents from non-English speaking backgrounds. The child care centre, as a non-threatening friendly place, is in a position to assist particularly families who are unfamiliar with other services in the community.

Letting All Parents in on a Multicultural Perspective

encourages the partnership

A centre that embraces a multicultural perspective will want to let parents know about it. When staff are enthusiastic most parents become enthusiastic too. This was certainly so in the centres visited during the process of writing this book. Nevertheless, some parents may have reservations and concerns about the meaning of a multicultural perspective which need to be acknowledged.

All of the parents interviewed for this project were positive about the presence of children from a variety of cultures. Some, although not all of them, mentioned the presence of staff from non-English speaking backgrounds as a positive aspect of the centre. However, others said that cultural and linguistic diversity in staff was far less important than other qualities.

EXAMPLE: A child care worker from a non-English speaking background who was hired as the head of a group within a centre to develop a multicultural perspective reported that she felt that some parents were sceptical of her at first, that in spite of having an Australian qualification, she had to prove to them that she was competent and knowledgeable. She attributed this to her non-English speaking background.

As is true with staff and with children, the only effective starting point for helping parents to embrace a multicultural perspective is addressing their feelings, attitudes, and concerns.

5 Staff

openness to change is important

The skills, knowledge, and attitudes of the staff are the most important influence on the quality of the program. As has been stated before, the success of their efforts to take into account the cultural and linguistic diversity that characterises the community depends not mainly on their knowledge of other cultures, although that is clearly an asset, but on their willingness to be flexible, to change, to look critically at their own biases and prejudices, and their appreciation of diversity (Ramsey, 1982).

As teachers we need to accept the fact that we, like our young charges, have inevitably been influenced by the stereotypes and the one-sided view of society that prevails in the schools and the media. (Ramsey, 1982:16)

The presence of children from a variety of cultures enriches the centre for all.

Offering a multicultural perspective to young children requires modelling it, living it in the centre. Children cannot be helped to value diversity if the adults who work

with them do not. They cannot be encouraged to throw aside their prejudices if the adults who work with them hold on to their prejudices. Hendrick (1988) warns that prejudices may be well hidden, even from the people who hold them. They may not be based on something as obvious and predictable as skin colour, but on negative attitudes toward, for example, certain life styles.

a conviction that diversity matters is vital

Staff who believe in and enjoy their work with children, who value diversity, will be able to offer a multicultural perspective meaningfully and honestly to children and their families.

Humility and a genuine desire to know more about other people are absolute prerequisites for designing and implementing multicultural education. From this perspective, we can genuinely learn about the children's cultural backgrounds and attitudes and start to form effective and reciprocal collaborations with parents and people in the community. (Ramsey, 1982: 16, 17)

time to talk about attitudes and values is necessary

It is important to be aware of the attitudes of current and prospective staff members toward people from other cultures. Because services may have evolved a clientele from a mix of cultures, over a period of time or may have gradually developed a multicultural perspective, it may be the case that current staff members have prejudices that need to be addressed. It is not uncommon, for example, for staff to be accepting of children who cannot speak English, but to feel negative, even hostile, towards parents with whom they cannot communicate. These feelings need to be brought out in the open in an atmosphere of respect for staff members, for it must be kept in mind that staff are likely to treat children the way they are treated.

Qualities to Develop in Staff

specific qualities are needed

Staff who work well in a centre embracing a multicultural perspective have a number of attributes. The following list of attributes is an adaptation of a list quoted by Spodek and Saracho (1983:126-27):

- the belief that cultural and linguistic diversity is a worthy goal;
- respect for the child and the culture and language he/she brings to care;
- the conviction that the culture and language a child brings are worth preserving and enriching;
- an awareness that cultural and linguistic differences are obvious individual differences;
- a commitment to enhance the child's self-image;
- a positive view of their own personal ability to contribute to a bilingual/multicultural perspective;
- a willingness to learn more about multicultural perspectives;
- flexibity in human relationships;

- a capacity to share ideas;
- a confidence in children and their ability to learn.

attitudes are important

In employing new staff, assessment of the following is essential:

- first-hand experience of another culture and/or a multicultural perspective;
- attitudes toward people from cultural and linguistic backgrounds other than their own;
- openness to change, "teachableness", the capacity to identify areas where more knowledge and greater skill are needed;
- attitudes toward parents, including their perceptions of appropriate involvement by parents in child care;
- strategies they believe are effective in disciplining children;
- ways they suggest to help children resolve conflicts;
- value they place on children maintaining their first language while learning English;
- ability to work with people from a variety of cultures in a team;
- enthusiasm and curiosity about other cultures;
- evidence of ethnocentrism (that is, a view that "Our way is right");
- willingness to consider alternative points of view.

These would be some items to gain information about, in addition to the usual questions asked, of all applicants, regardless of the position or the applicant's cultural background. It is naive to assume that all people from other cultures are without prejudice or that they have good communication skills and the ability to relate effectively to a variety of people.

The inclusion on interview panels of people from a range of backgrounds who understand the qualities being sought will increase the likelihood of a good choice.

Staff from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds

are important in centres

It is very difficult to model a multicultural perspective if all the staff are English-speaking Anglo-Australians. Just as was said that the presence of families from other cultures is an asset to a multicultural perspective, having staff from other than Anglo-Australian cultural backgrounds is also very important. Their presence makes it possible, that a multicultural perspective will exist, although by itself does not guarantee that this will be so.

Some of the advantages of having staff from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds are:

Staff who work well in a centre with a multicultural perspective have many attributes.

rowide role models

- their presence allows staff to model the valuing of diversity;
- they are likely to bring with them a wealth of knowledge about their culture;
- they have a language other than English which they can use with all children, as well as with children whose first language is the same as theirs;

- they can be an important bridge with parents from their own cultural and linguistic background, and no doubt will have a great deal of empathy with all parents from non-English speaking backgrounds;
- they make it easier for the multicultural perspective to be implicit, present all the time.

can make a difference

It is acknowledged that some centres in country areas may have difficulty finding bilingual staff from diverse cultures, but the importance of doing so cannot be stressed too strongly. Obviously, the best situation is when the staff members' cultures match those of the children and families using the centre, but when this is not possible it is still of tremendous value to have staff from a mix of cultures.

In advertising positions, a decision will have been made about the relative value placed on cultural background and/or facility with a language other than English. When cultural and linguistic diversity is a priority, it is critically important that potential employees meet other criteria needed for the position, and that where there are areas where improvement is needed, the resources are available to help them gain the skills they need. This includes "a level of English language competency sufficient to understand and participate in the planning and implementation of early childhood bilingual programmes" (Clarke, 1985: 4).

need to be supported

Once the staff are hired, it is the responsibility of the centre to support them in succeeding. It does not assist the provision of a multicultural perspective if the staff from non Anglo-Australian backgrounds are working at odds with the other staff, constantly needing direction, being corrected, or being relegated to doing menial tasks only. Neither is it helpful if staff from other cultures are hired but are not encouraged to share their culture. In other words, the presence of staff from a variety of cultures does not automatically constitute a multicultural perspective.

Similarly, it is inappropriate to place the responsibility for a multicultural perspective solely with the staff from other cultures. A multicultural perspective cannot be offered even with outstanding efforts by only one or several members of a team. Staff from other cultures will not be assisted by feeling the pressure to perform.

Assisting Staff to Contribute

build their confidence

Most people in a new work situation will "play it safe" avoiding taking risks until they feel secure. In addition, staff from other cultural and linguistic backgrounds may have had the experience of needing to hide their background and to fit in to the mainstream. While the ultimate aim is to have staff from minority cultures share aspects of their culture with children and other staff, it is not realistic to expect this immediately. There may need to be a long period of building up their confidence

before they are ready to share. They will have to be convinced that what they offer will be welcomed by staff and parents. It is essential to give them time to settle in, and to convince themselves that they actually have something to contribute.

"With staff from non-English speaking backgrounds, often it is a matter of asking the right question to convince them that they have something special to contribute about their culture. They may not think of the idea until someone prods them. Often they say, "It's just everyday in my country, it's not special." You have to raise to a conscious level aspects of their culture that are so familiar to them that they cannot think of them. Once they try something that is successful, it's like unlocking a door."
(Multicultural Resource Unit Field Officer)

give them time and support

If staff are pressured to be instant authorities on their culture they are likely to resort to inappropriate or extremely obvious manifestations of their culture, such as traditional costumes. They may need considerable assistance to focus on aspects of their culture that are important, meaningful, and appropriate for children (Hopson, 1989a).

EXAMPLE: In a centre with a number of staff from a variety of cultures, where staff confidently and naturally incorporate aspects of their culture into the program, the author asked the person in charge of the group if they were like that when they were employed. She replied that they definitely were not. "They often lack confidence, but are supported to gain confidence, gradually encouraged to bring in something, which is pretty non-threatening, to try something simple, and when they see that it goes well they get a tremendous boost to their self esteem." She says that the main criteria in staff selection are enthusiasm and openness — "They have to be keen; we can infect people, show them it's fun". When asked how she does that, she said "On the run!" She said that she tries to build a close relationship between staff working together. They often have working dinners. She tries to put a lot of information in writing and uses photos to increase team work.

support them to take risks

Encouraging staff to show initiative, to take risks, involves risk taking by the person in charge. That is, when staff are encouraged to use their own ideas, there is the risk that what they offer will be unsuitable.

"Staff confidence is fragile, so we have to be gentle about the developmental appropriateness of the activity, especially with unqualified staff. We talk a lot about developmental stages, and sometimes when the risk is not too high I let them make a mistake and learn. It is essential that all this takes place in a setting where there is an attitude of questioning, growing, and learning among staff."
(Group Leader)

value the use of the first language

Staff may also need encouragement to use their first language at times with all children, in play, with songs and rhymes.

A Spanish speaking worker who speaks very good English said that she always comforts distressed children or soothes them in Spanish before they go to sleep. "I can communicate love and caring so much better in my own language", she said.

Being a Team

talk to each other

Staff who work together as a team talk together, respect and like each other and have mechanisms for sorting out differences. In the three centres used to gather information for this project, what came across strongly was a sense of fun, enjoyment of their jobs, a sense of challenge about it and a strong sense of teamwork. It was obvious that staff delighted in their own cultural and linguistic diversity.

value each other's contributions

Each staff member, qualified and unqualified, was valued for the unique contribution he or she could make. There was also a strong sense of trust among staff members.

EXAMPLE: While serving a South American sweet that had been prepared for afternoon tea for the children by the Uruguayan worker, staff with different first language backgrounds discussed with great interest the similarities and differences in their first languages of the word for sugar.

EXAMPLE: It was reported on several occasions that some staff feel insecure when other staff speak a language they do not understand. They ask, "How will I know what they are saying to the children?"

The aim is to have staff from other cultures share their cultures with the children.

It is interesting that there is not that concern about English speaking child care workers, and yet how much of what they say do their colleagues and supervisors hear? Trust is essential.

Gaining Qualifications

is important

continuing education may need fostering

Bilingual staff may need encouragement, as may all staff, to undertake further study, to gain an initial or an advanced qualification. This may require ensuring that tertiary training institutions offer relevant courses and appropriate support for students with English as a second language. It is important that people from non-English speaking backgrounds are able to act effectively in positions of leadership in early childhood settings. What messages do children receive when the workers from non-English speaking backgrounds are always the unqualified ones, never the ones in charge?

"I can communicate love and caring so much better in my own language."

Each staff member is valued for the special contribution they make.

6 Language and Communication

helps us understand others

Learning to communicate and to understand the communication of others is one of the biggest challenges young children face. While non-verbal communication is powerful and exists from birth, learning language is one of the most significant achievements of the first five years of life. It is linked closely with intellectual development as it structures the child's view of the world. It impacts strongly on self concept and social relationships. Andreoni (1986:13) states: "To ignore a person's language and culture is to question the validity of those individuals and communities who are that language".

contributes to self concept

When language is mentioned in the context of a multicultural perspective, the first thing that comes to mind for many people is the child who speaks little or no English. Some, in fact, mistakenly reduce a multicultural perspective to a remedial exercise that is necessary when a centre is faced with the "problem" of having a child who does not speak English. Having such a child is a challenge for centres, and it is reasonable that staff may want some guidance, but a multicultural perspective is much richer and broader than just helping a child learn English.

A Variety of Languages for All Children

can be used naturally

A multicultural perspective is for all children, and so the use of languages other than English is an important program component. It is important for all children to learn to speak English, but it is equally important that those whose first language is other than English have that language developed and maintained. As with other aspects of a multicultural perspective, other languages can be incorporated into the program naturally and appropriately. Obviously, this can be done most effectively, by native non-English speakers who are staff members, in conversations, songs, rhymes, and stories.

promotes acceptance of other languages

The intent is not to have children learn to speak another language, although they will pick up some words surprisingly easily. Rather the aim is to acquaint them with the notion that there are many languages and accents in the world, and that one is not superior to the others. Children love playing with language, and they take great delight in the sounds and rhythms of other languages or accented English.

is fun

EXAMPLE: A group of children with English as a first language are sitting at a table with a staff member making play dough. A Spanish speaking relief worker walks up and says, "What colour is that? In Spanish, we call that colour azul". A few minutes later she says, "Look, blue water — agua azul".

EXAMPLE: A Spanish speaking child care worker has prepared breakfast with the "help" of a few English speaking children. A four year old says to her, "Betty, could I have some more eggs?" Betty tells her, " I am sorry, but there are not enough eggs for you to have more". The child repeats the request several times, and Betty replies in a similar way. When an Anglo-Australian child care worker walks by, the child turns to her and says in an exasperated voice, "Betty won't give me any of her huevos!"

Non-Verbal Communication

speaks volumes

People who work with young children need to be sensitive to the power of non-verbal communication, both their own and that of others. Even very young children, including babies, pick up powerful messages from the facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice of the people familiar with them. A great deal of communication goes on with children and their parents in the centre even when the staff and the families do not speak each other's language.

is different for different cultures

Staff also need to be aware of the non-verbal communication of the children in their care, particularly those who may be learning English as a second language. The following excerpt is taken from "English as a Second Language in Early Childhood" (Clarke, 1988a:np).

Each culture has its own non-verbal language, including facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, body contact, use of personal space. This non-verbal language has its own way of transmitting messages. Some gestures tend to have formalized meanings. e.g. frowning and shaking the head may imply lack of understanding. However a very high proportion of gestures are culturally determined and mean different things in different countries. Touch is another way of communicating.

It is important that staff become aware of cultural differences in non-verbal communication. In some cultures it is impolite to look directly at the adult who is speaking to them. Other cultures do not like children being touched on the head. If staff are aware of these differences, misunderstandings can be avoided.

The Child Who is Learning English as a Second Language

Clarke (1988b) reports that children in Australian child care centres speak over sixty

different first languages. The child whose first language is not English does not have a deficit, but rather, if encouraged and assisted, will have a tremendous advantage.

It is important to reject the idea that difference means inferiority or that competency in the English language is the same as cognitive ability. Children who cannot speak English are not disabled or remedial. (Clarke, 1988:np)

Benefits from hearing first language

When there are children in the group whose first language is not English, and/or children who speak little or no English, it is highly desirable to make arrangements for at least one person in the centre to speak their first language at least some of the time. This is important for several reasons.

- It enables the child to understand more of what is going on.
- It validates the child's first language as being acceptable.
- It helps to build trust and a sense of security.
- It provides the foundation for learning English as a second language.
- It provides a means for others who do not speak the language to understand the child.

Benefits from a bilingual staff member

This bilingual person ideally is a staff member, but obviously this is not possible in every centre or where there is a large mix of cultural and linguistic backgrounds. A Supplementary (SUPS) Worker, someone from a casual ethnic workers' pool, or a volunteer from the community can be of great assistance. It is critically important, however, that the bilingual person is a proficient speaker of the language.

Very young children can pick up powerful messages from the facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice of the people around them

Most children will learn English quickly when the conditions are right. When a child is learning English, the following points are very important.

- It is best if the person who speaks to the child in his or her first language does not mix it with English, that is, does not switch back and forth from the child's first language to English.
- The child will learn English more quickly if not pressured.
- The child will be assisted to learn by adults who speak naturally to them.
- A certain amount of non-verbal communication is natural and merits a response from the adult.

may go through a silent period

Clarke's research (1988b) indicates that many children learning English go through a silent period, when they do not speak at the centre, either in English or in their first language. Her research shows that much language learning is still going on during this time, and that pressuring children to speak will only interfere with their language development. Clarke's research shows that the quality of interactions with adults during this silent period is critical. The idea is to allow the child to remain silent but to maintain an involvement in the program. Clarke identifies a number of effective strategies that can be used by an early childhood teacher with a child going through the silent period, or for that matter, any child who is learning English:

- talking to the child even if there is no response;
- including the child in small groups of other children;
- asking a variety of questions;
- including other children as a focus of conversation;

Each culture has its own non-verbal language.

- using songs;
- learning a few simple phrases and counting in the child's first language;
- encouraging the child to respond non-verbally that is, with gestures or body language;
- giving lots of praise for effort, even minimal effort;
- sometimes giving the child opportunities to repeat what has been said, if he or she is willing;
- providing many opportunities for the child to interact with other children. Children may feel more confident talking to other children. The language children use with each other is sometimes more complex than that used with adults;
- giving many opportunities for role play, as this is a good way to practice language.

Clarke (1988:11) concludes:

eeds to be notivated

A good programme for the development of the English language must include the provision of situations which motivate children to develop language and other skills in a context that allows them to explore, observe, experiment and follow their own interests. The part played by the teacher/worker in such situations is vital in helping a child to focus his attention, clarify his experience and develop more complex uses of language.

ctions and words should go together

Actions and words that go together assist children to learn English. This is true not only of conversations, but of books as well, where the pictures should support the text. As is true with all children, children who are learning English benefit from being in a rich environment, where there are many interesting things to talk about, and interesting talk going on. Cooking activities, books of photos of the children at the centre, and interest tables are but three of the types of experiences offered in a child care centre of high quality that lend themselves to a good language experience.

nay be discouraged y correction

Focusing directly on errors and correcting children in an obvious way does not assist language learning. Errors are to be expected when children are learning a new language. Adults assist children to learn language when they respond to the content of what has been said, even when it has been said incorrectly. It is easy for staff to make the mistake of expecting more of non-English speaking background children than is expected of native English speakers, for example, requiring them to answer in complete sentences (Clarke, 1988b).

arns more than words

eeds support for long time

After children learn some English, staff may assume that their English is fine, and it may not be. Even when they have developed some proficiency in English, it is still very beneficial to have their first language used in the centre. There are several reasons.

- Self esteem is enhanced by feelings that "my language is acceptable".
- Maintenance of the first language is important as a foundation for the second.

- Hearing the first language outside the home helps to maintain a link for the child and family between centre and home. It is not helpful for the child to have the idea that there is a home language and an outside language.
- The child needs the first language to be nurtured to assist cognitive development.
- The child whose English is not good needs to be extended in the first language.

The presence in the centre of languages other than a child's first language can be beneficial to the child, so long as they are used in a way that does not confuse the child who is learning English. For example, it would not be helpful for a child care worker to speak in Polish to a Greek child who was in the process of learning English. As is true with children whose first language is English, the use of other languages in songs or chants is fine. Over time, the child would pick up the notion that there are many languages, all of which have merit.

It is helpful and comforting to a child as well as to the child's family for English speaking staff to learn a few words in the child's first language. The most important of these is the child's name un-Anglicised and pronounced properly. However, staff who do not speak a language will not assist children by attempting to read to them in their first language.

Children will learn English more quickly if not pressured.

other children should be encouraged to be supportive

English speaking children may need help to be sensitive and non-critical of the child learning to speak English.

EXAMPLE: A child who has just recently begun speaking in English is working at a table with two other children. "Look at tis" he exclaims, proudly holding up his dough sculpture. One child turns to the other and says, "He says 'tis' " and they both giggle.

Maintaining and Developing the First Language at Home

is essential

It is vital that parents from non-English speaking backgrounds speak their first language with the child at home. Some parents feel an obligation, when asked by staff, to say that English is spoken at home, and some actually stop using their first language on the false assumption that this will help their child learn to speak English. Staff can provide information that reassures parents that this is not the case and encourage them to use their own first language. Many parents are very relieved to be told this.

encourage parents to use their first language

Staff demonstrate that they value the first language when they have a range of books and cassettes that can be used in the centre and lent to parents to use at home.

Parents should be encouraged to maintain and develop the child's first language in a variety of ways. They can extend the child's language skills by talking to children when they are out shopping, taking them on outings, reading and telling them stories, singing and chanting.

Children learning a second language should be immersed in language in a supportive environment which facilitates their learning. This environment will enable them to concentrate on what they are communicating rather than on the words and phrases they use. (Clarke, 1988a, n.p.)

7 Centre Policies

make public the reasons for practice

A written policy statement makes explicit key principles upon which practices are based. Policies will cover the needs, concerns, and interests of children, staff, and parents, as well as links with the community.

Having carefully worded policies developed by the centre staff and parents working together is very important for a number of reasons.

- The process itself raises issues of importance for discussion and clarification, and exposes differences in beliefs that may have been unacknowledged previously and that need to be resolved.
- It constitutes a significant bridge building exercise between parents and staff.
- It makes explicit for new staff and parents what the centre represents, as well as its priorities.
- It helps staff to be clear about the rationale behind their practices, and will assist them when difficult situations arise.
- It should help clarify for staff and parents areas where compromise and negotiation are possible.

encourage accountability

Of course, written policies alone do not ensure the quality of practice, but they do assist staff to be more accountable for what they are doing.

must integrate a multicultural perspective

The principles of a multicultural perspective will pervade all aspects of policy. A centre policy will make it clear that no form of racism or discrimination will be tolerated. As Moodley (1983:15) states:

Racism is not negotiable and that message should be made loud and clear.

will be non-discriminatory

A policy will address the priority given to linguistic and cultural background in hiring staff and the need for people with expertise and sensitivity to issues related to acknowledgement of cultural and linguistic diversity to be on the management committee as well as the staff.

promote access and equity

It will also address issues related to access and equity for families from diverse backgrounds. Access and equity is a Commonwealth Government policy often stated as a "fair go and a fair share". Access and equity means ensuring that the structures and

Children may need help to be sensitive to the child learning to speak English.

practices of Australian society reflect and respond to the diversity of the Australian population, serving and providing equally for all Australians and eliminating barriers of language, race, and culture. Access and equity is an entitlement to a fair and equitable share of government provision and delivery (Hawke, 1989).

A policy statement from the Sydney Lady Gowrie Child Centre (1988) is provided below. It must be noted that at this centre the term "cross-cultural" is used in preference to "multicultural" but has the same meaning. A second policy statement from the Australian Early Childhood Association (1988) can be found in Appendix 1 (p. 95). Both statements may be useful as a starting point for staff in developing their own policies, which is a much more useful exercise than simply adopting policies of other centres. Appendix 2 (p. 97) is a brief excerpt from the early childhood submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Education and the Arts — National Language Policy (Clarke, 1987:11).

LADY GOWRIE CHILD CENTRE (SYDNEY) POLICY FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A CROSS-CULTURAL AND NON-DISCRIMINATORY CURRICULUM

Policy Statement

The workers, parents and management of this Centre endorse the concept of a cross-cultural and non-discriminatory curriculum, and believe that this perspective should be implemented throughout all Centre programmes.

They believe that educational programmes must support the child's self-esteem and pride in family, community, ethnic and linguistic heritage.

Workers are selected for their qualifications and experience, but also, whenever possible, for their bi-culturalism and bi-lingualism.

Aims and Goals

To this end it is understood that:

- Each worker undertakes to implement a cross-cultural, anti-discriminatory perspective to the curriculum, encouraging positive attitudes towards gender equity, and the provision of equal opportunity for all;
- Each worker acknowledges and respects the beliefs and feelings of the many cultures represented within the community, and their expectations with regard to their children's upbringing and education;
- Each worker seeks awareness of his/her own feelings, beliefs, and background, and evaluates the effect these may have on attitudes and interactions;
- The physical environment of the Centre and its programmes (including objectives, focus and direction, incidental learning opportunities and group activities) reflect its commitment to a cross-cultural and non-discriminatory perspective;
- The programme is recorded, so that parents and visitors can become aware of its objectives and implementation. It is regularly assessed and evaluated against its objectives;
- The programme is developmentally based and relevant to children's life experiences, interests, and social skills.

Implementation

- Observation of the community served by the Centre, and identification of the socio-economic and cultural grouping of its families.
- Observation of the developmental and linguistic levels and the interests and experience (with other cultural groups) of the children.
- Preparation of a culturally and experientially broad learning environment which

allows children to discover differences and similarities in readily apparent, concrete ways.

- Development of a broad cultural and non-biased perspective — which challenges stereotyping and discriminatory behaviours and encourages peaceful, just and equitable co-operation in all areas of the programme.
- Children whose developing attitudes are influenced towards a positive view of diversity will acquire:
  — an expanded awareness of others,
  — a greater capacity to communicate,
  — an increased willingness and ability to co-operate,
  — a growing sense of social responsibility,
  — a high level of personal confidence and self-esteem.

To be useful, a policy statement must not be static, not something developed once, then set in stone. There needs to be a periodic review to assess the following:

- ***Do the practices of the centre match the policies, and if not, where are the changes needed?***
- ***Do the policies reflect the latest information about good practice as well as the needs of the community the centre serves?***
- ***Are there new areas where policies need to be developed?***

8 The Environment

Makes a difference

Young children learn through their senses; they are very responsive to the sights, sounds, tastes and feel of things around them. Therefore, the physical environment, equipment and materials have an important role in the learning that takes place. Handling equipment and materials from other cultures, becoming familiar with them, understanding their use and feeling comfortable with them gives children first hand experience of diversity. Appropriate physical manifestations of their culture of origin makes parents feel welcome, and their familiarity helps children from those cultures feel more secure.

Can reflect diversity

A multicultural perspective goes far beyond window dressing. Probably the most obvious and least threatening way to increase diversity in a centre is to alter the physical environment. If that is as far as it goes, it is superficial and tokenistic. However, a centre that undertakes to incorporate a multicultural perspective in a meaningful way will no doubt have its efforts reflected in the physical environment.

Incorporating a multicultural perspective into the physical environment is really very simple. Basically, it boils down to two main points:

- being more creative, more open in the choice of materials and equipment that are used; and
- establishing an interesting, developmentally appropriate environment that assists children to enjoy each other and to experience a minimum of frustration.

Choosing Equipment and Materials

Several criteria can be listed for choosing materials and equipment.

- Safety.
- Attractiveness to children. Their standards may very well differ from those of adults.
- Developmental appropriateness. Given the skills, understanding, and interests of the children, can this piece of equipment be used in a meaningful way?
- Appropriateness for handling, learning by doing and accessibility. There is nothing more frustrating to young children than attractive objects on high shelves out of reach.

- Cultural sensitivity and appropriateness. Does the object reflect the culture and lifestyle of contemporary families from that culture living in Australia? And when there are families from other cultures in the centre, do the materials used reflect their culture? For example, portrayals of traditional Aboriginal people in the bush, while accurate for some of those people, do not reflect an accurate picture of urban Aboriginal people who use mainstream services. Staff must take care to ensure that children are getting the messages they think they are giving and that these are accurate.

plan to avoid stereotypes

Care must be taken that the materials, pictures, and books do not portray people from other cultures in romantic or undesirable ways. There may very well be images that people want to leave behind, for example, the image of Chinese coolies.

There are many aspects of the physical environment where a multicultural perspective can be incorporated.

- In the home corner through the provision of:
  - cooking and eating implements from a variety of cultures;
  - low table and cushions (children often prefer to sit on the floor anyway);
  - a variety of ways for dolls to sleep, for example, coolamons (Aboriginal wooden cradles), mats on the floor, hammocks;
  - a range of equipment for carrying babies for example, slings, baskets, prams;
  - a variety of baskets and bags for shopping;

The environment can help children to discover differences and similarities.

  - empty food containers from a variety of cultures — the colourful labels encourage conversation;
  - dolls with a variety of skin colours and features.
- In the dress-up area through the availability of clothes, shoes, handbags, hats, clothing from other cultures which would be worn normally as well as those worn on special occasions.
- By using pictures/posters:
  - from other countries;
  - that include people from a range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds;
  - which when themed, such as a collection of pictures of buildings, various types of transport, or musical instruments, always include examples from other cultures;
  - of people from other cultures not just in pictures of situations or places that are different or unfamiliar but also in Australian life and communities.
- By ensuring that play materials and equipment include items from other cultures.
- By having books which include:
  - stories that depict children with various differences in ordinary situations;
  - stories from other cultures;
  - the portrayal of people from other cultures in Australian settings.
- Meal and snack times by providing a variety of utensils and equipment appropriate to the food being served — for example, chopsticks, Chinese soup spoons, Thai rice bowls, Turkish cups.
- At sleep and rest times by allowing children to sleep and rest in the way they are comfortable such as mats on the floor, stretchers and hammocks.

(A more detailed check list can be found in Section 9.)

The aim is to help children see and accept diversity.

The message: There are many ways of doing things. Different people have different preferences. There is no one best or right way.

Using Materials and Equipment from Other Cultures

at all times

In a centre that values diversity, materials and equipment from a variety of cultures are around all the time and are incorporated honestly and naturally, not saved for special times. The aim is to help children to see and accept the variety of ways people have found to meet their needs and live their lives.

"It's so important that something from another culture, a way of doing things that is different from 'mainstream Aussie culture' whatever that means, is not made a big fuss over. If you make a fuss of it, the children get the idea that it's quaint or silly or not quite right, and that defeats the whole point of a multicultural perspective. The problem is that this is how many adults think about cultural and linguistic diversity if we are honest with ourselves. We accept different ways at a very superficial level, but deep down many of us really believe that forks and knives are the right way to eat and chopsticks are a bit silly. It's like thinking we don't have accents, only people from other countries do." (Child Care Worker)

A multicultural perspective will be reflected in the physical environment of the centre.

Materials from a variety of cultures can be around all the time.

without making them exotic items

The message when, for example, the home corner always contains chopsticks, a wok, along with some plates, cutlery, and saucepans is vastly different to the one children get when, for a week or a day, the home corner is changed into a Chinese home corner, where everything is unusual, and then it is changed back to what is familiar again. Remember the tourist curriculum? The latter is a perfect example of treating the ways of other cultures as some sort of deviation, a side trip away from what is real and right (Derman-Sparks, 1988).

in the daily life of centres

The idea is that children come to accept diversity as a normal part of their lives. This also suggests that wherever possible, variety is incorporated into the routines of the centre, not just the children's play, for it is in "real life" experiences that the most effective learning will happen. Children get different messages if at group time there is discussion of the various things people sleep on, but at rest time everyone is required to use a stretcher. Similarly, what is the meaning for children if chopsticks are relegated to the home corner, and forks and spoons are compulsory at lunch time? In both cases, the latter experience is the one that gives the strongest message.

"The reason the hammocks for dolls are outside is that this was a natural extension of using the Turkish hammocks for the babies to sleep in. Our Turkish worker told us about the way hammocks were used in her country. We tried it and it worked tremendously well. Naturally, when the children saw that, they wanted something similar to put 'their' babies to sleep in."

(Child Care Worker)

change regularly

Materials and pictures need to be changed periodically to keep up interest. If left there for a long time, people will stop paying attention to them, they become boring. If they are put away for a while, when they are brought out again, they will be greeted with renewed interest.

Where to Find Materials

staff and parents are best sources

Staff and parents are the best source of materials. People from non-English speaking backgrounds are likely to have items at home that they are willing to share or to donate. Any parents, staff or friends of the centre who are travelling overseas can be encouraged to shop for the centre. Obviously, some direction from staff and some funds or the promise of reimbursement when they return will increase the likelihood of a successful outcome!

Travel bureaus are a good source of pictures, both in brochures and posters. *National Geographic* magazines and UNICEF diaries are another wonderful source of pictures.

Second hand shops and markets usually have a store of hidden treasures.

Migrant resource centres and ethnic community groups are often willing to donate materials.

some can be made easily

Many materials can be made easily and once parents are convinced of the benefits of a multicultural perspective, they may be willing to donate some time to make some materials.

"Once you start looking for materials from other cultures to use in the centre, you see them everywhere. They are there." (Child Care Worker)

Creating a Caring Space

enhances the work of centres

Greenman (1988) states that although the quality of the interactions between staff and children is the most important determinant of quality in a program, it is most often the physical environment that differentiates mediocre from very good child care centres. He asserts that the environment must be organised to allow staff to meet the needs of children effectively and to enable children to engage themselves pleasantly and constructively with the environment without constant adult assistance.

The following are some particularly important characteristics of the environment.

allows involvement

- The environment is rich, with sufficient interesting and involving materials.

There is no best or right way.

Children often get into difficulty with each other when there is nothing better to do, when they are bored.

- The environment is colourful, but not overstimulating, too busy or too noisy. Too much stimulation leads to frustration, which leads to undesirable behaviour.

provides for moments of peace

- Provision is made for children to have some moments of peace, to get away from the crowd occasionally, to be alone and without interference, even momentarily. Places and spaces to get away can be created by the arrangement of furniture and equipment. Quiet time away from the group may be especially important for a new child just settling in, particularly a child who speaks little or no English. There are so many new things to cope with that it can be overwhelming.

allows children to spread out

- Children are encouraged to spread out, to use all the space available to them. Altercations happen when they are forced to be close together.

minimises need to compete

- For very young children, there are duplicates of favoured materials, to avoid unnecessary and inappropriate pressure to share. Children need to learn to share, and the best way to help them is to not require them to share excessively.

A carefully planned space will play a major role in helping children learn to care for, enjoy, and respect each other. As Greenman (1988) asserts, it is not that a program takes place in an environment; rather, to a large extent, the program is the environment.

9 The Curriculum or Program

program – curriculum – perspective

The terms "program" and "curriculum" are being used very broadly in this section to encompass every aspect of the daily experience of children. Up to this point, the term "multicultural perspective" has been used in preference to curriculum or program to suggest the pervasive nature of the incorporation of cultural and linguistic diversity into the life of the centre. Given the broad definitions of "program" and "curriculum" those two terms can be used interchangeably with "perspective".

Interactions

are more important than activities

In keeping with this broad view of curriculum, it needs to be emphasised that the curriculum is mainly about interactions and relationships, not activities. The many spontaneous informal interactions and experiences children have daily in care shape their attitudes and beliefs more than do the planned activities. For example, do we help them to learn that there are many right ways and so no one right way, or do we say this is the right way but some people do it differently? There is a critical difference. Do we help children to move toward the understanding that the Anglo-Australian culture is but one among many in the world?

Pictures need to be changed to keep the children's interest.

Derman-Sparks and Jones (1988:11) state that there is a major difference between presenting experiences to children in a way that says, "This is the way we do it, and this is the way they do it" to doing so in a way where the message to get across is "What are all the different ways in which people solve their daily problems?" The anti-bias curriculum (Derman-Sparks, 1988) deals with discrimination and prejudices based mainly on three types of differences: gender, ethnicity, and disability. Real differences are acknowledged, and children are helped to recognise discrimination and unfairness and to think of ways to do something helpful to combat them.

The two examples that follow illustrate, perhaps surprisingly to some readers, the essential nature of interactions that characterise care of high quality.

should be based on respect and understanding

EXAMPLE: The notion of respect for a child is embodied beautifully in the following incident: A four year old Italian speaking child with minimal English, on her second day at the centre was experiencing some distress amidst periods of coping happily in her new situation. Each time she was distressed the child care worker comforted her sensitively in English, telling her that her mother was coming back after lunch. At the first available opportunity, however, she called in an Italian speaking worker to explain in Italian that the mother would return after lunch, even though at that point the child was not distressed. She wanted to make certain that the child understood.

EXAMPLE: Twin girls in one centre became very distressed and strongly resisted using the toilet when other children were present. Staff talked it over with the parents, found that they had strong feelings about the children having privacy when using the toilet, and made arrangements for these children to use the toilet when no one was present.

Goals

a basis for appropriate curriculum

Appropriate curriculum is always based on goals. Elizabeth Hopson (1988:np) has developed a list of goals. She prefaces them with the reminder that catering for cultural and linguistic diversity requires adults to recognise that . . .

Children bring to the learning situation more than their developmental characteristics. They also bring particular knowledge and skills as members of a unique cultural and ethnic group.

She lists the following goals:

- Accept each child as an individual and as a member of a cultural group.
- Respect the ethnic, cultural and social backgrounds of each child.
- Teach children to take pride in their own culture and to develop a respect for other cultures.

- Help all children to learn to function successfully in a culturally and ethnically diverse society.
- Develop positive self concepts in those children most affected by racism.
- Help all children experience in positive ways their own differences as culturally and socially diverse people and their similarities as human beings.
- Reflect positively the realities of culture past and present throughout the entire program.
- Select developmentally appropriate aspects of cultures and incorporate them into play activities.
- Encourage children to experience people of diverse cultures working together as unique parts of a whole community.
- Be aware of personal feelings and beliefs about your own culture, self identity and level of self esteem.
- Be aware of feelings and beliefs about other cultures.
- Avoid cultural and social stereotyping.

Adding to the list some explicit goals related to the maintenance of the first language as well as English as a second language would acknowledge the critical importance of language.

Some Considerations in Programming

It is counter to the philosophy of this book to insert a special category into each week's or fortnight's plan called Multicultural Experiences or Activities, as that means it is tacked on, is separate from the mainstream life of the centre. However, it is important for staff to have some means of looking critically at their program to ensure that a multicultural perspective is pervasive throughout.

Derman-Sparks (1988:12) defined the tourist curriculum:

Children visit a culture for a day, or maybe longer (if they are doing a unit) and then go home to a classroom which does not integrate different cultures into its own daily life.

recognise difference is natural

Similarly there is a vast difference for children between focusing on a single culture in the program rather than on incorporating aspects of a variety of cultures throughout the program. Having a theme on Greece or Indonesia or other countries is inappropriate. It only serves to highlight differences, and will tend to focus on the obvious. Experiences should be offered in a natural, non-gimmicky way, so that children derive a sense of their relation to real life.

give reasons for differences

"When we show children different ways of doing things, we must not stop at just doing them. We must talk about why the differences exist. There are sound, legitimate reasons for most of the

differences that exist. If we don't, children will see other ways of doing things as little more than a curiosity. The real challenge is finding appropriate ways for children to experience those differences in a meaningful way. We want children to appreciate that there are a number of ways of doing things." (Multicultural Field Officer)

What Is Offered in a Multicultural Program?

richness and variety

The broad categories of appropriate experiences offered to children in early childhood settings are not altered by embracing a multicultural perspective. They are such things as blocks, books, stories and puppets, art and craft, manipulative play, dramatic play, large motor activities, cooking, excursions, music and movement, science and maths experiences. A multicultural perspective adds richness and variety to the opportunities, experiences, and materials within those broad categories.

more choice

"Some of the staff were very wary at first about the whole idea of 'being multicultural'. What won them over was that it opened up so many more possibilities for experiences for the children, so many more things to do." (Child Care Centre Director)

Accept each child as an individual.

A program of high quality will be based on an understanding of the value of self-initiated, first hand experiences for young children.

It is through play that the child continually arranges and re-arranges the symbols which enable him to increase his understanding of the world. Through the ever-changing patterning of language and bodily action, he engages with and comprehends his immediate environment and his place within it. This can enable him gradually to understand not only his own situation but, crucially, his position in relation to others. It leads him to look at his world from different perspectives. Through interactive play with others, the child can build into his practical knowledge personal experience of other children and adults, irrespective of their ethno-social background or characteristics.

(Bernard van Leer Foundation 1984:15)

everyday familiar experiences

"A program of high quality will always be based on children's interests. A multicultural curriculum should be about things that have meaning in the real life of children; things like sleeping, eating, playing, talking, sitting, carrying, clothes." (Child Care Worker)

A Look at Some Features of a Curriculum

food is an important part of the program

Incorporating the foods of a variety of cultures into the centre's menu and giving children opportunities to prepare and eat these foods is a pleasant and relatively easy way to expand children's appreciation of diversity. Contributing recipes and cooking with the children are comfortable ways for some parents to be involved.

"The way to help people appreciate a multicultural perspective is through the tummy." (Turkish Child Care Worker)

Use appropriate aspects of cultures by building them into play activities.

EXAMPLE: Seven children aged two to five years are sitting around a low table with three child care workers. Morning tea has been prepared with the children by the Turkish worker. It consists of bread and rose petal jam, olives, fetta cheese, and tea poured from a samovar into small glass cups. The children eat Berra's breakfast enthusiastically, most of them at least sampling everything. In this centre occasions such as this one, where different food and drink are served in a variety of ways, are common.

For the child from a non Anglo-Australian background, having familiar food can be a welcome touch of home. Children may need encouragement to eat, but will not benefit from being pressured or bribed to eat.

The use of food for play or as a craft medium (for example, rice or corn for pouring, beans for pasting) is wasteful and may be particularly offensive to families who may have lived in poverty in the past, where starvation was a reality.

stories from other cultures

Stories from other cultures can be incorporated into the program, keeping in mind the criterion of developmental appropriateness. Frightening or excessively violent stories are not appropriate for young children, regardless of their cultural relevance.

All types of music, not just children's music, can be used in a child care program. In fact, using only children's music is unnecessarily restrictive and deprives children of exposure to the range of beautiful music available. Recorded music used selectively rather than playing continuously in the background will be attended to better. Music is more effective and enjoyable when the type fits the occasion. Lively, fast music does not assist young children to "wind down" at rest time.

songs in a range of languages

Songs from other cultures, in other languages can be incorporated into the program. Children will get the message then that there are many different ways to sing — in English being only one of them. Children will find it easier to pronounce the words than will adults. Music from other cultures need not be singled out as special.

Songs and action rhymes that incorporate children's names, such as going around a circle and for each child saying "Whose name is _____?" are a good way to involve each child and in a small way, to "celebrate" each person in the group and establish a sense of group.

Children enjoy live music. Whenever possible, musicians can be brought into the centre to play. There is probably hidden talent among parents and staff in almost every child care centre. All it takes to uncover it is for someone to have a go to demonstrate that children are highly approving, even if the adults think the standard is not quite high enough.

Focusing on Similarities and Differences

can be done in different ways

Program planners will at times help children to focus directly on and discuss similarities and differences (Derman-Sparks, 1988). This can be done in a variety of ways through:

requires acceptance

- discussions about each other's hair texture, skin colour, height, clothing, family types, interests;
- offering opportunities to experience variety — by eating in different ways using spades, Chinese soup spoons, chopsticks or hands at lunch, by bringing a collection of different hats for different purposes and including ones from various cultures, by using and commenting on a variety of different kinds of bread, by having different types of dolls;
- stories and books that deal with differences;
- picture collections of different types of shelter, transport, families.

A program of high quality is based on self-initiated, first-hand experiences.

can happen spontaneously

As is obvious, that much of this can happen spontaneously and informally when adults are sensitive and tuned in to opportunities to give helpful messages about the acceptability of differences.

EXAMPLE: A child care worker collected a wide range of shoes and offered them to the children to try on. She talked with the children about the reasons for the differences, the occasions when particular types of footwear would be appropriate. There were boots, sneakers, Turkish slippers, Dutch clogs, thongs, wooden sandals, boots, glamourous high heels, embroidered slippers.

Routines

are a part of the program

Whatever methods are used for programming, that is deciding what children's daily experiences in care will be, they should ensure that there is critical analysis of and careful planning for the total experience, including routine experiences. These include:

occupy a large part of the day

- arrivals, separation from the parent and movement into the group, and reunion with the parent and departure;
- transition times;
- sleep and rest times;
- meal and snack times;
- hand washing, toileting, and nappy changing.

Attention to these routines is important for a variety of reasons.

reflect the centre's attitudes to difference

- They occupy a large portion of the day for the child in care. If they are carried out carelessly, in a disorganised fashion, or in a non-child centred way, a significant part of the child's day has been wasted.

are a time for learning

- They are full of potential for carrying out the key principles of quality care that are listed at the beginning of this book. Language development, learning through doing, social interactions and feelings of autonomy ("I can do it!") can be nurtured through routine activities.
- They are some of the most meaningful times of the day for very young children. These experiences can increase or diminish feelings of trust and security.
- For the child from another culture practices and conventions related to sleep and rest, toileting, and eating may differ significantly from those of Anglo-Australians, and insensitive handling of these can result in stress for the child.
- For all people, foods and occasions for eating offer a pleasant, exciting arena for multicultural experiences. Incorporating a variety of foods into the centre's menu is a gentle, non-threatening way to introduce a multicultural perspective.

Centre Checklists

There are many checklists available to assist staff to look at the environment. Centre staff who are interested in assessing their environment will probably find it most useful to combine the best elements of several checklists and develop their own. Elizabeth Hopson from the Sydney Lady Gowrie Centre has compiled a checklist (1988a) for centres to use in assessing their environment. This list appears in full in Appendix 3 (p.98) and it is worth careful study. The mix of items pertaining specifically to cultural and linguistic diversity and those relating to quality care in general, in this checklist, reinforces one of the major premises of this book. That is, that providing a multicultural perspective is an application of principles of quality care.

Use foods from a variety of cultures.

Curriculum is everything that goes on in a child's life. Such a definition implies that a curriculum cannot be put once and for all into one specific set of activities but must be the continuing creation of teachers, parents and community members who observe, draw from, and build upon the children's actual world. (Williams and De Gaetano, 1985: viii)

10 Discipline: Helping Children Learn Respect and Caring

If it is accepted that a definition of discipline is "helping children learn to guide their own behaviour in a way that shows respect and caring for themselves, other people, and the physical environment", then the philosophy and practices related to discipline are an integral part of a multicultural perspective. A key tenet of the philosophy in this book is that acknowledging cultural and linguistic diversity rests on self respect and respect for others. Its aim is to help children learn to be assertive, to learn non-violent ways to resolve conflicts, and to eliminate discriminatory behaviour (Derman-Sparks 1988).

Staff can help children to discuss similarities and differences.

depends on a trusting relationship with adults

One of the greatest challenges in working with young children is helping them to learn to get along with other children. They are not born with these skills. The most powerful tool adults in child care have in helping children to learn this is their relationship with the child, the affection and trust the child feels for the adult.

recognises that others have rights and needs

Although admittedly the ability of very young children to view situations from another's perspective is limited, they can be assisted to learn that others have needs, rights, opinions and feelings and that these may differ from their own. This is accomplished through:

- encouraging positive interactions;
- calling attention to other points of view;
- encouraging communication with others;
- trying to ensure that they learn constructive ways to resolve differences;
- promoting co-operation, not competition.

Ramsey (1982) suggests that multiple age groupings in child care centres assist this.

Sensitive adults can informally give helpful messages about accepting differences.

through modelling and first hand experiences

The most effective way to help children is through their first hand experiences and through modelling, that is relating to young children in the way it is hoped they will eventually relate to each other. Through modelling adults help children learn the following:

- to empathise;
- to show affection;
- to help;
- to share;
- to talk out conflicts instead of resorting to displays of physical force;
- to interact in ways that do not demean, humiliate or embarrass;
- to respect others' requests and wishes.

takes account of self and others

Positive experiences with people who are different in a variety of ways can help children learn to assert themselves appropriately — that is, to say what they think and stand up for themselves at the same time as they try to understand and respect others.

Adults in child care can model, for children, caring for each individual in the group.

EXAMPLE: In one centre visited by the author, there is each day at morning tea a discussion about who is not here today, and possible reasons why. Even though this group includes some very young children, there is a sense of belonging, of knowing everyone who is in the group and missing them if they are away.

requires acceptance of negative feelings

One aspect of helping children learn respect and caring is acknowledging and accepting their own strong negative feelings, their rage, their fear, their anger and assisting them to deal constructively with those feelings.

acknowledges conflict

As one of the key principles states, conflict is inevitable whenever people are interacting in a meaningful way. Adults can help children learn not necessarily to avoid conflict, but rather how to deal with it constructively.

recognises the power of words

While it is desirable for children to learn to resolve differences with words rather than physically, they need to learn that words are very powerful, that they can hurt as effectively as physical force. Adults need to intervene and give the message that the behaviour is unacceptable whenever children display physical or verbal aggression or discrimination. A casual comment made in passing by the adult is insufficient, as is just comforting the victim without telling the initiator what was not good about it and a better way to resolve it. Saying "Don't do that" and moving on is not sufficient. Dealing with unacceptable behaviour is thought of as one of the most important components of the curriculum. It is hardly ever appropriate to ignore undesirable behaviour.

Staff can increase children's feelings of trust and security.

responds constructively to unacceptable behaviour

Some adults say that if children are left alone they will resolve their own disputes. This is true, but the ways they resolve them and the lessons learned may not be what adults would wish. If left to work out their own conflicts, children may learn that "might makes right", that force and aggression are effective ways to get what one wants.

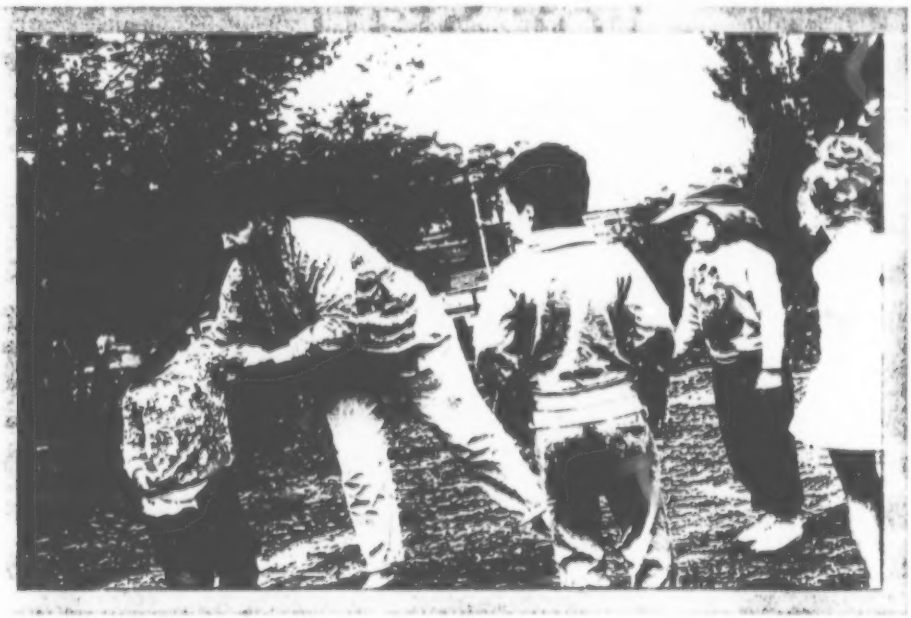
EXAMPLE: A toddler snatches a toy from another. The adult comes over and says gently but firmly, "You give that back; she had it first; you can have it when she has finished". Seeing that the toddler does not have the self control to hand the toy back, the adult helps her to give it back. She says to the toddler, "You made her very happy when you gave the toy back to her" and then helps her to find something else interesting to do.

That small example demonstrates a number of critical points related to discipline.

- Being firm when setting limits, but helping the child obey the limit set.
- Modelling the ways staff want children to resolve conflicts.
- Giving brief explanations about why the limit is set. Stopping a child from doing something or re-directing without saying why is a valuable opportunity lost.
- Having appropriate expectations for the age. It is quite expected and normal for toddlers to snatch, for example. Appropriate expectations keep the adult from over-reacting.
- Highlighting for the child approved behaviours and giving praise.

recognise reasons for behaviour

The child who speaks little or no English may mistakenly be labelled as naughty or aggressive in a centre. While some children who are not proficient in the language spoken in the centre may become withdrawn, others may act out their frustration by behaving in unacceptable ways, by being disruptive or destructive. Similarly, children for whom the environment or the expectations are unfamiliar may also present behaviour problems, which are usually an expression of their insecurity and discomfort with the new setting. Skilled staff respond firmly but with understanding and sensitivity when children misbehave.



A multicultural curriculum draws and builds on the child's world.

appropriate expectations are important

Sensitive and skilled staff prevent situations that call for discipline by offering appropriate experiences, assistance in getting along, and by having expectations that match the developmental levels of the children.

an agreed approach is essential

Parents within a culture differ widely in their beliefs about discipline, making this an area where it is risky to make generalisations based on cultural background. Suffice it to say that this is an area where children will benefit when staff talk through their own differences, are of one mind about practices within the centre and talk with parents to explain the philosophy and practices used and enlist their co-operation.

Children are moral and political beings . . . They are aware very young that color, language, gender and physical ability differences are connected with privilege and power. If they are to learn respect for themselves and others and feel comfortable with diversity, they need not only information but also many opportunities to explore issues of fairness and the uses of power. (Derman-Sparks and Jones, 1988: 11)

11 In-Service Education and Support For Staff

Families and staff are the key resources for a centre implementing a multicultural perspective. However, many centres find it difficult to implement a multicultural perspective because they lack resources, energy, time or expertise. Similarly, centres that are implementing a multicultural perspective need guidance, new ideas, time to reflect and to assess what they are doing.

Support and Advisory Services

are available and necessary

A multicultural perspective cannot be imposed from the outside. It has to come from the conviction and interests of the staff and families at the centre. However, resources and assistance from the outside can be invaluable. Child care staff do not have the time to do research and to collect resources, so if they are not readily available from staff or parents, it is essential that centres have access to a multicultural resource and advisory service. Where none exists, services will need to pool their resources. Assistance may be needed in the following areas:

- providing material resources (for example, pictures, books, play materials, dress-ups);
- offering in-service education for staff;
- recruiting staff from non-English speaking backgrounds;
- publicising the centre among various cultural groups in the community;
- recruiting families, and helping children settle in;
- providing informal support and advice to staff;
- linking the centre to community resources;
- making available written resources on various aspects of a multicultural perspective.

Support Group

share common concerns

It is very valuable for services within a geographic area that are trying to offer a multicultural perspective to talk together to support each other. Sharing problems, the solutions to them as well as resources is vital and reassuring. It would be appropriate and very useful if support group members were people in a variety of settings such as pre-school or kindergarten, early years of school, family day care, play groups, as well as child care centres implementing a multicultural perspective. The concerns they would have in common would undoubtedly override their differences.

Forming a support group and pooling resources and skills would be particularly important in rural and isolated areas.

In-Service Education

begin with what staff know and think

The term "in-service education" is used broadly here to include all activities that assist staff to work well with children, families, and each other. It certainly incorporates informal, unstructured discussions between staff, and time to look critically at, reflect on and make changes to current practice.

open up the issues

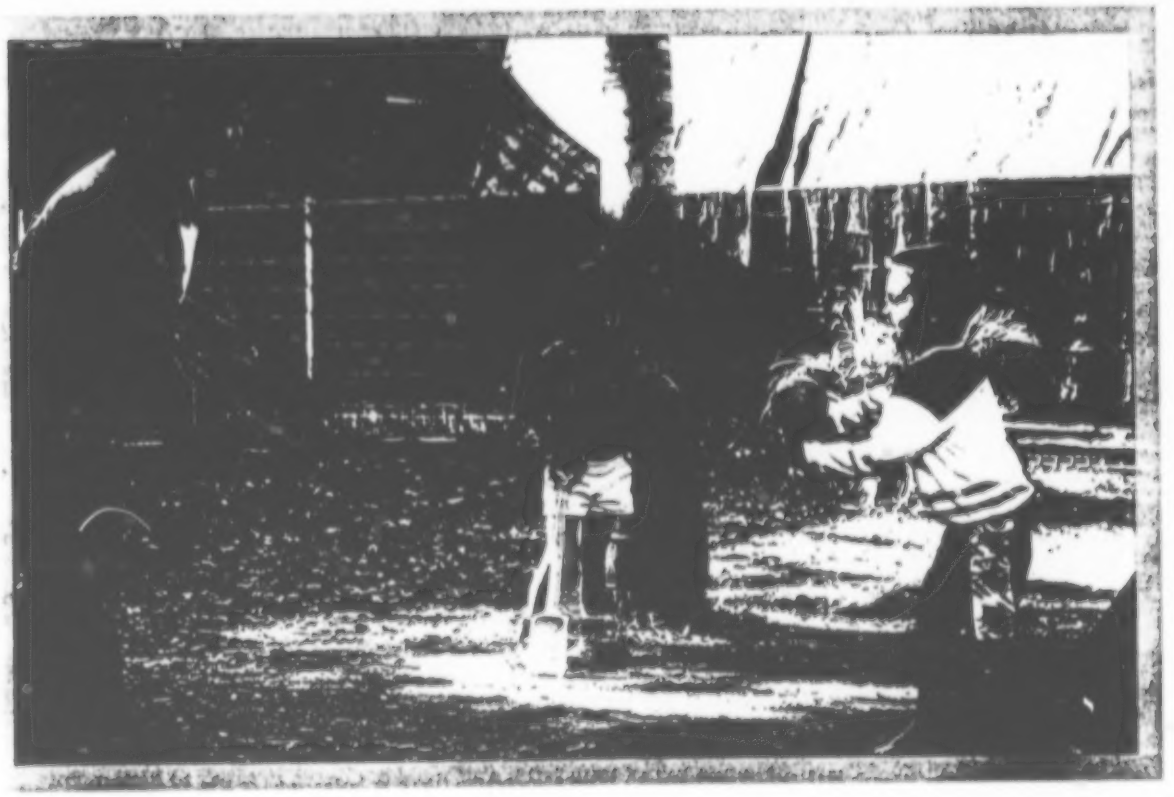
There are a number of topics that staff need to discuss in order to implement effectively a multicultural perspective. In order for a multicultural perspective to work, staff must be "on side", they must agree with the philosophy and practices. This may take a long time and hard work on the part of some staff, as it may require substantial changes in attitudes and assumptions. There will be staff members who will embrace the notion of a multicultural perspective easily and enthusiastically once they have been given new information or a different way of approaching their work. There will be others who will have reservations or who will actively resist changing. The climate needs to allow them to express their reservations freely. It is essential that these feelings are acknowledged and accepted before efforts are made to change them. This is a direct application of the principles of accepting individual differences and starting with the known when working with children.

"We don't do much about their culture here, the parents aren't interested, and besides, the children are too young; they've got no attention span."

"We're lucky; our ethnic children were born in Australia, so they know European ways."

"Poor child; his parents won't even speak English to him — don't they want him to get along in this country?"

"I think they get enough of their culture and language at home; we need to teach them our ways at the centre."



Having age appropriate expectations of behaviour is important.

"Those Greek mothers are so overprotective of their boys, they spoil them; that's his problem."

"She's Aboriginal, but she sends that child of hers to care every day perfectly clean."

Comments like these from child care workers reflect the starting points for some child care workers. Acknowledging these attitudes regardless of the degree of racism, ethnocentrism and misunderstanding they embody, is a starting point for change.

prejudice is often denied

The presence of staff from other cultures may help to alter prejudices, but it is common for people to maintain their prejudices while denying their existence on the basis of first hand experience. Variations of the following statement are common: "I'm not racist — I work with ethnics!" However, through sensitive discussion and in-service education, the perspectives and experiences of people from other cultures can be made real to people from the mainstream culture.

begin with similarities rather than differences

EXAMPLE: The author participated in a spontaneous discussion with a group of Ethnic Supplementary (SUPS) workers over morning tea. Someone mentioned something about an aspect of acceptable table manners in Australia. An animated discussion ensued about similarities and differences from culture to culture, with lots of demonstrations and examples and lots of laughter. What became apparent were two

things: the arbitrariness of some of the customs, and the strong belief each of the participants had because of years of learning and practice, about the absolute rightness of their way. This type of light discussion would be a pleasant non-threatening way for staff in a child care centre to move gently into exploration of similarities and differences.

acknowledge that many right ways exist

Light-hearted sharing of fairly superficial differences helps people to see beyond differences and helps them to see that others' ways of doing things are just as "right" for them as their own way is to them.

Topics for In-Service

The following list includes some topics related to a multicultural perspective that staff may want to explore with some outside assistance.

Families and staff are the key resources for a centre bringing multicultural perspectives to its program.

- The philosophy behind a multicultural perspective, and implications for practice.
- The philosophy and practice of discipline and its relationship to a multicultural perspective; how to help children most effectively to learn caring and respect; how to deal with racist and discriminatory behaviour in children.

- General information about other cultures and religions, with particular emphasis on topics related to children.
- Ideas for activities, experiences and materials that can be used to implement a multicultural perspective.
- The role of language in communication, with particular consideration of the child whose first language is not English. The importance and meaning of non-verbal communication and its implications for practice.
- Racism, prejudice, and ethnocentrism. This topic needs to be handled very skillfully and sensitively, as it deals with people's strongly held life-long convictions and feelings.
- The concept of culture as it relates to their own culture and that of others. In their work with children, staff need to understand that culture is learned by living it. Millikan and Steele (1988: np) quote Mock (1986: 31) who suggest that staff need to explore "their own cultural values and assumptions, and how their perception of child-rearing, discipline, parenting, education, communication, and other important cultural variables affects their interaction with children and families".
- Human relations and communications skills.
- Orientation to appropriate practices in child care (for staff from other cultures). It is ineffective and unfair to allow staff from other cultures to work in ways that are unacceptable to the centre or to prevent them from exercising autonomy because they lack information.

In the same way as a multicultural perspective should be integrated into the overall program, the valuing of diversity ideally should be addressed in all in-service activities. There is no area related to the daily operation of a child care centre that does not encompass issues related to a multicultural perspective.

Child Rearing Practices in Other Cultures

generalisations are not helpful

Information on child rearing practices in other cultures must be dealt with very sensitively to avoid presenting stereotypes or giving the erroneous impression that child rearing practices are homogeneous within any one culture. Staff may need help to view information given about child rearing in another culture only as a starting point for talking with parents about their values and practices.

An effective way to make the point about the inappropriateness of generalising is to ask staff in small groups to undertake the following task: Pretend that you are in another country and you have been asked to present a talk on the topic of Australian child rearing practices. As a group, decide what you would say. What usually happens is that lively debate occurs about what can be said accurately, and the point is made that it is difficult to generalise.

"I accept that giving information on child rearing practices is risky, and you do have to be very careful. I think it is worth the risk however, as long as people receiving the information understand that it is a starting point only, a basis for asking questions, making observations of individual parents." (Multicultural Resource Centre Co-ordinator)

information about different child care practices is helpful

EXAMPLE: An example of the usefulness of having some information about child rearing practices was mentioned in several centres. A Vietnamese child suddenly appears with large bruises on the back and arms. The staff immediately think of child abuse and become alarmed. Information about child rearing practices in Vietnam would include the practice of rubbing a coin fairly hard on a child's body to get rid of a cold or cough. Knowing this in advance would provide a context for discussion when the situation arises.

A broader perspective and attention to diversity within the culture is more likely to happen if in-service sessions on child rearing practices consist of a panel of speakers from that culture.

Looking at What's Happening

evaluation needs to be ongoing

helps improve practice

Child care centres of high quality monitor the program informally on an ongoing basis. Centres need to ensure that mechanisms are in place to assist staff to reflect periodically on their practices. The following questionnaire from the Free Kindergarten Association Multicultural Resource Centre (1988: n.p) will provide a starting point for centres to develop their own questions:

CHECK YOUR CENTRE

Are You Providing a Multicultural Programme Already?

1. Is your centre welcoming? Do you have posters, signs and notices in different languages?
2. Do you know the cultural/linguistic background of all the children in your centre?
3. Do you employ bilingual staff to maintain and extend the children's first languages?
4. Do you know some words and greetings in languages other than English?
5. Do you understand the way children learn English as a second language?
6. Do the activities provided reflect the cultural backgrounds of the children?

7. Are the parents encouraged to take part in the programme?
8. Do you provide interpreters to assist parents when enrolling children at the centre?
9. Does the lunch menu reflect different cultures and religious values?
10. Are all children encouraged through games, stories, songs and small group discussions to develop an awareness of their own identity and to share with others?
11. Are parents informed about the programme? Do all families feel accepted and valued?
12. Are efforts made to share holidays and festivals?

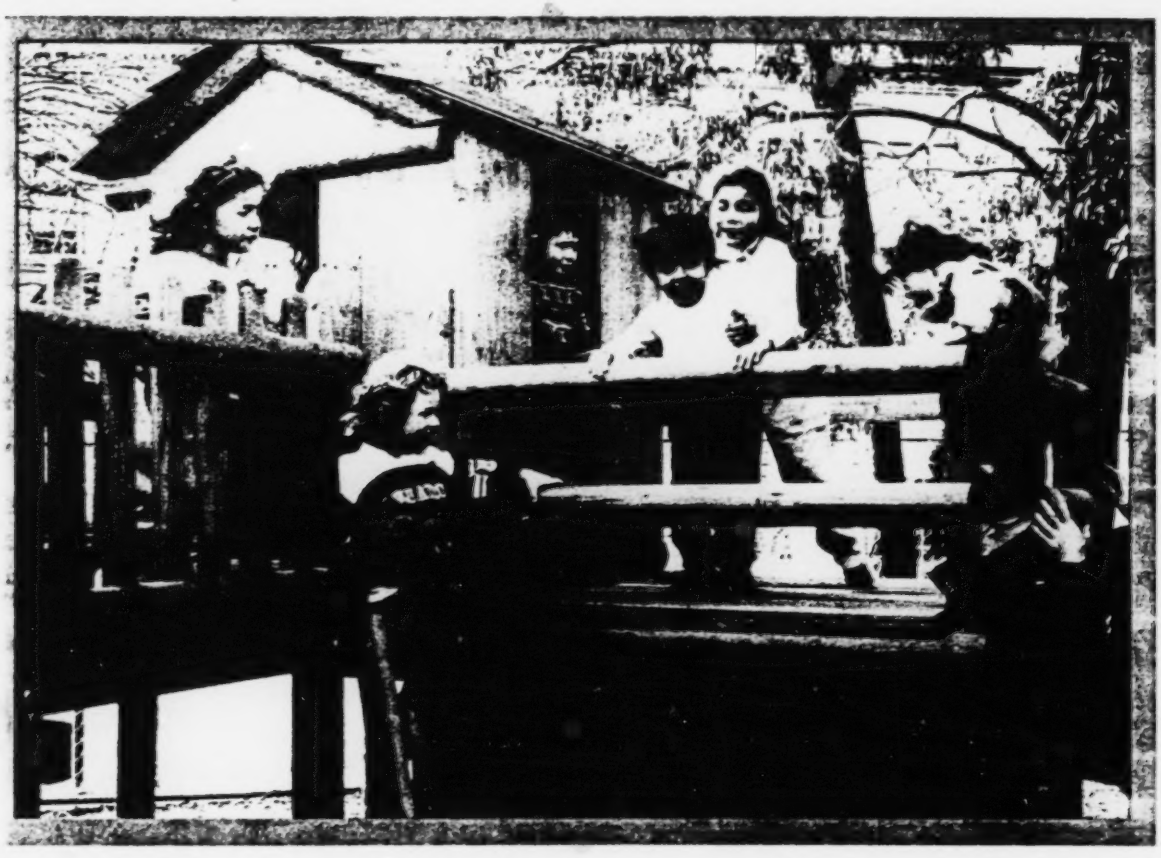
Developing a multicultural perspective is a dynamic, continuing process. Centres can never say, "We've got that now — tick that one off and we'll move on to something else". As with all topics, staff need to come back to it over and over.

12 Getting Started

beginning with what seems possible

The question that may have prompted many people to look at this book is "How do we start?" There is no doubt that significant change of any kind involves taking risks. The key to starting anything, or more accurately to convincing oneself that it is possible to start, is to start modestly and gently. Incorporating a multicultural perspective may begin with the food served, using children's names un-Anglicised, or increasing the variety in music and books, without singling them out as special. Staff may want to try just one change that reflects the philosophy in this document and see how that goes. Something non-threatening is more likely to be successful in the beginning. If that goes well, staff will feel encouraged to try something else. If it does not go well do not despair. It may need to be tried again, or tried for longer. The success of any meaningful change cannot always be assessed immediately.

Staff need to understand that culture is learned by living it.



keep trying

"In response to a question about how they started, a child care worker said, "I cringe when I think of some of the things we did with all the good intentions in the world. We had a lot of false starts in our efforts to attract families from non-English speaking backgrounds. But we kept trying. We don't feel that we've got it right yet, although we are very proud of our efforts and what we have accomplished. It's funny though — I suppose in ten years time I may look back on what we're doing now and think "How could we!". (Child Care Worker)

don't be afraid to make mistakes

In responding to a question about how the centre began its multicultural perspective, the director, who was a child care worker when the centre started, said:

"It started when the centre started, with food, with the variety of pictures on the wall, and with the explicit policy we had that we would answer children's questions about differences honestly" (Child Care Centre Director).

This example confirms once again the notion of following children's lead. They also began with some staff from non-English speaking backgrounds.

one step at a time

A multicultural perspective is not something that can be done suddenly and all at once. It is a gradual process of change, change that reflects a commitment and awareness on the part of staff and parents, and a responsiveness to needs expressed by children, parents, and the community. It should be communicated that way, and treated as it is in this book, as an application and extension of principles of quality care.

Getting Started with Parents and Staff

deal with parents' concerns

It is important that parents who use the centre understand and feel positive about a multicultural perspective. Some may have reservations. In the beginning some Anglo - Australian parents may worry that their children are going to be exposed "too much" to other cultures and will need reassurance and information about what a multicultural perspective involves.

EXAMPLE: In reflecting on the uncertainty some parents expressed about the centre embarking on a multicultural perspective, one child care worker enthusiastically described the development of family trees to allay some concerns. She encouraged parents to go back a couple of generations and bring in information and photos related to their family history. These were displayed. They made the interesting discovery that most Anglo-Australian families have connections with other cultures. It also served the purpose of making parents feel welcome and special. The child care worker felt that it was an excellent way to make the point that the families in the centre have a variety of backgrounds.

know your community

As has been stated previously, the community context must be considered — the degree of racism in the dominant culture towards minority cultures, relations between different cultural groups. Staff must be prepared to deal with the overt hostility that may exist. If they are not, they will probably give up in the face of it.

begin slowly

One staff member consulted stressed the importance of starting gently with parents and staff who have no awareness of the importance and benefits of a multicultural perspective. She started with a series of experiences leading up to Australia Day, focusing on the life styles, similarities, and differences of the people in the local community.

talk about why

A multicultural resource officer said that when she is asked to provide assistance to centres where there is some interest in adopting a multicultural perspective, she begins with a discussion of why it is a good thing and why it is necessary. In other words, she addresses the issues pragmatically. Her argument might go something like this: Early experience and education should equip children for the future and should assist them to look outward and not to fear people from neighbouring countries. We need to help children to view those people as friends and give them skills to get along with them. It is quite likely that children in care today will work with, live next door to or be the partner of someone from another culture. Cultural and linguistic diversity are a fact of life. She says that people respond to the pragmatic approach more positively than to an argument based on idealism (Hopson, 1989a).

Some Steps to Take

Elizabeth Hopson (1989b) has identified some steps that centres might take.

- Look at the centre's policy and philosophy.
- Look at community attitudes and look at the community resources. For example, does the centre population reflect the composition of the larger community? If it does not, ask why. There may be perfectly acceptable reasons, or there may be reasons that staff can and will want to do something about, such as hiring staff from that part of the community, altering the nature of the service to meet the community's needs, publicising the service, presenting a friendlier and more welcoming image.
- Undertake professional development for both staff and management committee. Encourage people to look at their own prejudices. A first step is to look at the term *culture* and what it means. Hopson says that a number of Anglo-Australian child care workers ask if there is an Australian culture or assume that there is not. Hopson asserts that two different levels of culture, both superficial and deeper levels, must be acknowledged. So first people will have to examine their own culture and how it affects them. Then they need to be helped to see stereotypes,

as many people have never thought about this. In doing this with staff, it must be remembered that the aim is to help children get below the surface, to explore diversity in a developmentally appropriate way. Staff may also need assistance with communication skills.

- Identify the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the children. Hopson asserts that a number of child care workers do not even know the cultural background or the language spoken at home for some children. This knowledge is essential for sensitive setting of objectives and staff must obtain this information in sensitive ways. It may not be appropriate to just put it on an application form or ask about it in an initial interview.
- Get to know each child's background, development, and interests.
- Prepare an environment that embodies a multicultural perspective.
- Incorporate a multicultural perspective in all curriculum areas.
- Know where to get resources. Establish links with the community.

Addressing Racism

the most significant issue

The most significant ongoing issue in a multicultural perspective is combating racism and prejudice among staff and parents. Pettman (1986:30) suggests some strategies for countering racism and prejudice which can be adapted to child care.

1. We need to get our objectives straight.
2. We need to analyse the situation to identify constraints and possibilities.
3. We need to begin where people are, and keep in mind what we know about how people learn, where we get our views and prejudices from and how we change them. (Some people may have just received incorrect information and will change when presented with new information.)

Pettman provides a list of do's and don'ts:

- Begin gently. If we react too strongly or make people feel immediately threatened or guilty, they will retreat.
- Open up the issues. Get racism on the agenda. Get things out in the open, where we can discuss them....
- Recognise that people have real doubts and fears, which may or may not be racist. It doesn't help if we start by saying racism is bad and labelling people as racist, thus preventing the airing of doubts or objections, which can then be dealt with.
- Don't just say "You're wrong". Feed counter information and other perspectives into the discussion. Encourage other people to find the information for themselves; it is much more convincing.
- Don't legitimize prejudice. While encouraging people to express their views, don't

simply let them stand, or you may reinforce prejudice. One opinion is not as good as another, it is not just a matter of opinion. Encourage everyone (ourselves included) to analyse different views, ask for reasons and suggest other possible explanations.

- Take a clear stand against racism. While remaining open and negotiating, also be forceful about your opposition to racism, and explain why ...
- Make your arguments relevant. Adapt examples and case studies to suit the audience ...
- Identify contradictions, use the space between what people say ought to happen, and what is happening ...
- Discuss feelings. Prejudice and racism are highly emotional issues. People get angry, get hurt, will reject your views, and maybe you; or they may feel guilty and powerless. Don't try to suppress these feelings, or pretend that they do not exist.

the process will require change

- Personalize and de-personalize. Encourage people to examine their own personal experiences, and views; to empathise, imagine how they might feel in others' shoes. But don't stay with personal anecdote alone. Encourage people to look for connections and patterns ...
- Don't reinforce stereotypes ...
- Don't act above it all (as though you have resolved it all for yourself) ...
- Make alliances. Join others who have similar concerns.
- Accept that you can't please everyone.
- Don't just talk about it . . . Ask yourself what you are doing about it.

The Professional Context

A lack of understanding and sensitivity about a multicultural perspective on the part of bureaucrats and in-service providers may constitute a significant obstacle for directors and staff as they work to implement a multicultural perspective. In discussions about multicultural perspectives in early childhood services, this issue was raised on a number of occasions.

The issue of educating those people who are unaware that they need to know something more or different is a sensitive one, but one that must be handled urgently if real changes are to be brought about in services. It is of little value to alter the views of practitioners if people in more responsible positions do not support their philosophy and practices.

There is a need for all providers of in-service education, resources, and advice to child care personnel to be knowledgeable about and sensitive to issues related to a multicultural perspective so that they can incorporate it into every area of in-service provision. It could be said that if the integration of a multicultural perspective into every aspect of a child care centre is the aim, then the ideal would be that in service

sessions or materials which deal specifically with a multicultural perspective would not be needed.

Early experience and education should equip children for the future.

Phillips (1988:47) gives some good ground rules when people are starting to offer a perspective that acknowledges the cultural and linguistic diversity of our community:

- *We must share our uncertainty with each other and allow each other to make tentative statements.*
- *We must acknowledge our misgivings, voice our ambivalence.*
- *As we expose our viewpoints to others, we must agree to listen to each other without judging.*
- *We must work through our anger and hostilities, be open about our differing viewpoints, admit our hurts.*
- *We must trust each other to find answers together and work toward change.*

That, in brief, is what a multicultural perspective in child care is about — moving toward change, and the journey itself is rich, colourful, exciting, and rewarding for all who join in.

APPENDIX 1

AUSTRALIAN EARLY CHILDHOOD ASSOCIATION
SPECIFIC POLICY INTERPRETATION
RELATED TO CULTURAL DIVERSITY

1. Awareness and Acceptance

Australia is a pluralist society composed of people from a wide variety of backgrounds including linguistic diversity, cultural values and expectations.

It is essential that:

- Australia's cultural diversity be recognised in the development of services for young children and their families.
- All programs be based on a sound knowledge of child development.
- Children's services should support the diversity of cultures, languages and identities which offer all children the opportunity for developing positive attitudes towards themselves and others

2. Access to Services

- Families should have the right to choose from a range of services which reflect their needs.
- Access to early childhood services should be facilitated by the provision of freely available and appropriate multilingual information in the languages represented within a particular community, and English translations should appear on such documents.
- Services should be planned, implemented and evaluated with communities to ensure that they meet the specific needs of all children and their families.

3. Language Development

- Appropriate language development is essential for the emotional, intellectual, and social development of the child.
- Children with language backgrounds other than English should have the opportunity to develop, maintain and extend their home language within early childhood services.

- Parents who wish to maintain their first or home language should be encouraged and supported.
- All children should have the opportunity to become competent in the English language using appropriate methods.

4. Recently Arrived Immigrants and Refugees

- The special needs of recently arrived immigrants and refugee children and their families must be recognised.
- Accordingly, subsidised services should be developed with additional resources, to reflect their particular cultural and linguistic needs.

5. Bilingual Staff

- All early childhood services should be encouraged to employ staff from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds.
- Funding should be available to employ *additional* staff with a bilingual background where a particular need is apparent.

6. Staff Development

- All training courses for early childhood personnel should reflect and be responsive to the pluralist nature of the Australian society both in the selection of students and the course context.
- Within courses, particular emphasis should be given to the understanding of child language development and the acquisition of both first and second languages by the young child. This should include the opportunity for practical experience in promoting English as a second language.
- Continuing education on multicultural issues should be readily available for all staff working with young children.
- Funding should be available to establish and maintain appropriate resource and advisory services to assist the early childhood field in the provision of multicultural programmes.

APPENDIX 2

EXCERPT FROM THE FREE KINDERGARTEN ASSOCIATION SUBMISSION TO THE SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE ARTS — NATIONAL LANGUAGE POLICY

Language is a tool that gives everyone power and the ability to make choices. Therefore accessibility to language is essential.

English is the most widely used language in Australia, and must be recognised formally as the national language. However, it is also important to recognise the importance of languages other than English; the place of English as the national language in no way mininises the importance of the home language and culture of non-English speaking Australians.

All speakers of languages other than English have the right to programmes such as bilingual and community language programmes, which maintain and develop these languages. Bilingual programmes must be seen as a viable, educational mode in Australia.

Early childhood programmes of all kinds have a special role in the learning of English, whether it is English as a second language, or as a mother tongue. The early years of childhood provide the optimum time for growth and development, and therefore this period should be exploited fully in order for all children to develop to their potential.

(Clarke, 1987)

APPENDIX 3

THE CENTRE ENVIRONMENT CHECKLIST

1. Entrance, Lobby Areas

- Are there posters, notices, information, displays, welcome notices in relevant community languages?
- Is there space somewhere in the centre especially devoted to the interests and cultural backgrounds of the parents of children in the program?
- Is there information for parents, in relevant community languages, giving details of the program, names of staff, etc.?
- Are there multilingual information leaflets for parents in addition to leaflets in English?
- Do the pictures, displays, etc. reflect the multicultural nature of Australia?

2. Housekeeping Area

In addition to the usual furniture, household utensils, etc. does the area include:

- Additional utensils commonly used in homes of people from different cultures, e.g. wok, chopsticks, briki?
- Furniture common to different cultures, e.g. low tables with cushions for sitting; mats for bedding?
- Clothing ordinarily worn (everyday, for festivals and holidays) by people of different cultures?
- Food packages (tins, boxes, etc.) that have labels in other languages as well as in English (e.g. those found in ethnic food shops)?
- Puppets that have clothing, skin tones, features representing different cultures?
- Girl and boy dolls with features, skin and hair colour and varieties of clothing to represent different cultural groups?
- Posters, pictures, photos, etc. to show families from different cultures in typical family situations, e.g. feeding children, work roles, etc.?
- Artifacts, decorations reflecting traditional colours, patterns of various cultures, e.g. mats, rugs, wall hangings?
- Baby carriers from different cultures?

3. Art/Craft Area

- Are art/craft activities set up outdoors as well as indoors?

- Is the area set up away from heavy traffic areas?
- Are there any designs or patterns displayed representing different cultures, e.g. Aboriginal motifs, Pacific Islander designs ?
- Does the area display crafts common to different cultures, e.g. weaving, woodwork, pottery, enamel ware, embroidery?
- Is there opportunity for children to work with natural materials, e.g. twigs, leaves, stones, earth, clay?

4. Library

- Is the area set up in a quiet place away from heavy traffic?
- Is the area attractive and inviting?
- How many books are written in English?
- How many books are bilingual?
- Do the illustrations in some of the books reflect the children's environment and experience?
- Do the illustrations and content of some of the books reflect positively different cultures?
- Are the books available for loan by families in English and community languages?

5. Block Area

- Is the area large enough for children to play constructively?
- Is the area located away from quiet activities?
- Are there posters, illustrations, photographs of people, buildings, transport, etc. typical of the local community?
- Are there frequent displays of posters, photographs, etc. reflecting different cultures and lifestyles?

6. Puzzles/Games/Manipulative Equipment

- Do the materials develop concept and skills in various ways?
- Do the materials include: spatial relationships ____ sequencing ____ seriation ____ counting ____ classification ____ memory ____ matching ____ association ____?
- Do some of the illustrations on the materials reflect the children's environment, e.g. rural, urban?
- Do some of the illustrations reflect different cultures?
- Do some of the materials have words printed in English and community languages?
- Are the materials clearly visible and easily reached?

7. Music and Movement

- Are there records, cassettes of music from different cultures?
- Do the children have access to musical instruments typical of different cultures?
- Do children have the opportunity to see and hear music and dances of different cultural groups?
- Are dances, musical rhythmic games taught that are typical of different cultures?
- Are children taught finger plays, rhymes, songs in community languages?

8. Outdoor Area

In addition to equipment commonly found in outdoor areas are there any of the following:

- Music of different cultures to accompany children jumping on a board, etc.?
- Permanent outdoor music centres containing Indian bells, wind chimes, chime bars with different musical tones, etc.?
- Cubbies made from palm fronds, branches of trees, canvas, etc.?
- Materials and assistance to make mud bricks?
- For dramatic play:
  - low tables and cushions
  - outdoor markets with mats and baskets
  - area for preparing, cooking, and eating food outdoors, e.g. cooking in underground oven
  - making animal enclosures
  - hammock for children
  - hammock for dollies?

9. Sand Play

In addition to the usual equipment:

- Are there a variety of materials commonly used by other cultures, e.g. woks, steamers, strainers, Lebanese cake moulds?
- Is there opportunity to make use of sand, earth, and clay within different cultural traditions?

10. Water Play

In addition to the usual equipment:

- Are there a variety of materials commonly used by other cultures, e.g. briki, Chinese bowls, etc.?

11. Woodwork

- Is there a woodwork bench available?
- Are there frequent displays of wooden objects/pictures, typical of different cultures, e.g. buildings, bridges, forms of transport?

12. Centres of Interest

- Are there pictures, posters, artifacts displayed of events that have special significance to the children and parents in your centre?
- Are there displays and pictures used in story time, discussions, etc.?
- Are parents asked to help in setting up displays to provide information, to translate notices, etc.?
- Do menus reflect the food habits of children attending the centre?
- Are alternative foods available to children when foods are not allowed for religious or cultural reasons?
- Do the cooking experiences in the playroom encourage children to experiment with foods other than those familiar to them?

13. Staff

- Are all the staff encouraged to learn more about the cultures in the centre as well as other cultures?
- Are bilingual/bicultural staff employed at the centre?
- Are the bilingual staff encouraged to use their language with the children throughout the day?

(Hopson, 1988a)

APPENDIX 4

RESOURCE CENTRES

Any time resources or advice is needed, the resource centres listed below can be contacted.

Australian Capital Territory

Australian Early Childhood Association
P O Box 105
WATSON ACT 2602

Ethnic Children's Services
Migrant Resource Centre
Griffin Centre
CANBERRA CITY ACT 2601

New South Wales

Ethnic Child Care Development Unit
Ethnic Child Care Family Community Services
Co-operative Ltd
13/142 Addison Road
MARRICKVILLE NSW 2204

Fairfield Multicultural Children's Resource Centre
1 Pevensey Street
CANLEY VALE NSW 2166

Illawarra Migrant Resource Centre
3 Rawson Street
WOLLONGONG NSW 2500

Multicultural Resources Unit
Elliott Avenue
ERSKINEVILLE NSW 2043

Newcastle Multicultural Children's Service Unit
Room 7/8 City Arcade
NEWCASTLE NSW 2300

Wollongong Children's Multicultural Resource Unit
P O Box 75
WOLLONGONG EAST NSW 2500

Northern Territory

Migrant Resource Centre
Cavanagh Street
DARWIN NT 0800

Queensland

Brisbane Ethnic Child Care Development Unit
P O Box 557
WEST END QLD 4101

Migrant Resource Centre Townsville Ltd
P O Box 1858
TOWNSVILLE QLD 4810

Mt Isa Ethnic Communities Council
West Street
MT ISA QLD 4825

South Australia

Network SA
95 Palmer Place
NORTH ADELAIDE S A 5006

South Australian Council of Social Service Inc
RAOB Building
194 Morphett Street
ADELAIDE S A 5000

Tasmania

Migrant Resource Centre (Northern Tasmania) Inc
'Civic Square'
75 Cameron Street
LAUNCESTON TAS 7250

Victoria

Free Kindergarten Association of Victoria
Multicultural Resource Centre
273 Church Street
RICHMOND VIC 3121

Victorian Co-operative Children's Services for Ethnic Groups
569 Nicholson Street
NORTH CARLTON VIC 3054

Western Australia

Beaconsfield International Child Care Association
Doig Place
BEACONSFIELD W A 6162

Ethnic Child Care Resource Unit
245 Churchill Avenue
SUBIACO W A 6008

Lady Gowrie Child Centres

Lady Gowrie Child Centre
Elliott Avenue
ERSKINEVILLE NSW 2043

Lady Gowrie Child Centre
228 St Pauls Terrace
FORTITUDE VALLEY QLD 4006

Lady Gowrie Child Centre
39a Dew Street
THEBARTON S A 5031

Lady Gowrie Child Centre
17 Runnymede Street
BATTERY POINT TAS 7004

Lady Gowrie Child Centre
36 Newry Street
NORTH CARLTON VIC 3054

Lady Gowrie Child Centre
3 Yaralla Place
KARAWARA W A 6152

Northern Territory

Northern Territory Children's Services
Resource and Advisory Program
P O Box 37766
WINNELLIE N T 0821

Both the Free Kindergarten Association Multicultural Resource Centre and the Sydney Lady Gowrie Child Centre which played a substantial role in the project that led to this book, sell and lend a large range of resource materials. They have catalogues of current stock, and should definitely be contacted for their extensive lists of resource materials.

CONTACT:

Free Kindergarten Association
Multicultural Resource Centre
273 Church Street
RICHMOND Victoria 3121
Telephone (03) 428 4471

Multicultural Resource Unit
Lady Gowrie Child Centre
Elliott Avenue
ERSKINEVILLE NSW 2043
Telephone (02) 517 2755

REFERENCES

Andreoni, H. (1986) The language rights of early childhood in multicultural Australia. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood* **11**(3), 13 - 17.

Australian Early Childhood Association (1988) Specific policy interpretation related to cultural diversity. In *Australian Early Childhood Association Policy Statement*. Canberra: Australian Early Childhood Association.

Bernard van Leer Foundation (1984) *Multi-cultural Societies — Early Childhood Education and Care. Summary Report and Conclusions*. The Hague, The Netherlands: Bernard van Leer Foundation.

Clarke, P. (1988a) *English as a second language in early childhood*. Melbourne: FKA Multicultural Resource Centre.

Clarke, P. (1988b) English as a second language in pre-school aged children. In *Proceedings of the Australian Early Childhood Association 18th National Conference*. Canberra: Australian Early Childhood Association.

Clarke, P. (1987) Language Policy Early Childhood. Free Kindergarten Association (Submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Education and the Arts.)

Clarke, P. (1985) *Working with bilingual aides*. Melbourne: Free Kindergarten Union, Multicultural Resource Centre.

Community Child Care (1985) Migrant parents' involvement. *Community Child Care Newsletter* **22**, 11-12.

Derman-Sparks, L. (1988) "It isn't fair!" Anti-bias curriculum for young children. In B. Neugebauer (ed.) *Alike and Different: Exploring Our Humanity with Young Children*. Redmond, Washington: Exchange Press, 8-15.

Derman-Sparks, L. and Jones, E. (1988) Meeting the challenge of diversity. Draft document, Pacific Oaks College, Pasadena.

Free Kindergarten Association Multicultural Resource Centre (1988) Multicultural perspectives in early childhood programmes — Check your centre. *Resource — Newsletter of the Free Kindergarten Association Multicultural Resource Centre* **54**, n.p.

Germanos-Koutsounadis, V. (1988/89) Multiculturalism — Have we learned anything? *Rattler*, **Summer**, 9-10.

Greater London Council/Inner London Education Authority (1986) *Basic principles of good nursery practice*. London: GLC/ILEA.

Greenman, J. (1988) *Caring Spaces, Learning Places: Children's Environments that Work*. Redmond, Washington: Exchange Press.

Hawke, R.J. (1989) Speech on the Opening of the Addison Road Multicultural Child Care Centre, Marrickville, New South Wales.

Hendrick, J. (1988) *The Whole Child*. Columbus, Ohio: Merrill.

Hopson, E. (1989a) Personal communication.

Hopson, E. (1989b) *Valuing diversity in centre based care: Steps for implementing cross cultural perspectives*. Sydney: Gowrie Resource Unit, Lady Gowrie Child Centre.

Hopson, E. (1988a) *The centre environment checklist*. (Handout). Sydney: Gowrie Resource Unit, Lady Gowrie Child Centre.

Hopson, E. (1988b) *Goals of cross cultural education*. (Handout). Sydney: Gowrie Resource Unit, Lady Gowrie Child Centre.

Lady Gowrie Child Centre Sydney (1988) *Policy for the implementation of a cross-cultural and non-discriminatory curriculum*. Sydney: Lady Gowrie Child Centre.

Millikan, J. (1989) Personal communication.

Millikan, J. and Steele, P. (1988) Resources: Availability — adaptation — development. *Proceedings of the Australian Early Childhood Association 18th National Conference*. Canberra: Australian Early Childhood Association.

Moodley, K. (1983) *An anti-racist approach to the care of under fives: Some principles of policy and practice*. London: Borough of Lewisham.

Pettman, J. (1986) Racism: Attacking the problem. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood* **11**(3), 27-32.

Phillips, C. B. (1988) Nurturing diversity for today's children and tomorrow's leaders. *Young Children* **January**, 42-47.

Ramsey, P.G. (1982) Multicultural education in early childhood. *Young Children* **January**, 13-23.

Saracho, O.N. and Spodek, B. (1983) Preparing teachers for bilingual/multicultural classrooms. In O.N. Saracho and B. Spodek (eds.) *Understanding the Multicultural Experience in Early Childhood Education*. Washington: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 125-146.

Steele, P. (1989) Personal communication.

Williams, L.R. and De Gaetano, Y. (1985) *Alerta*. Menlo Park, California: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.

Yeatman, A. (1988) *A review of multicultural policies and programs in children's services*. Canberra: Office of Multicultural Affairs.